



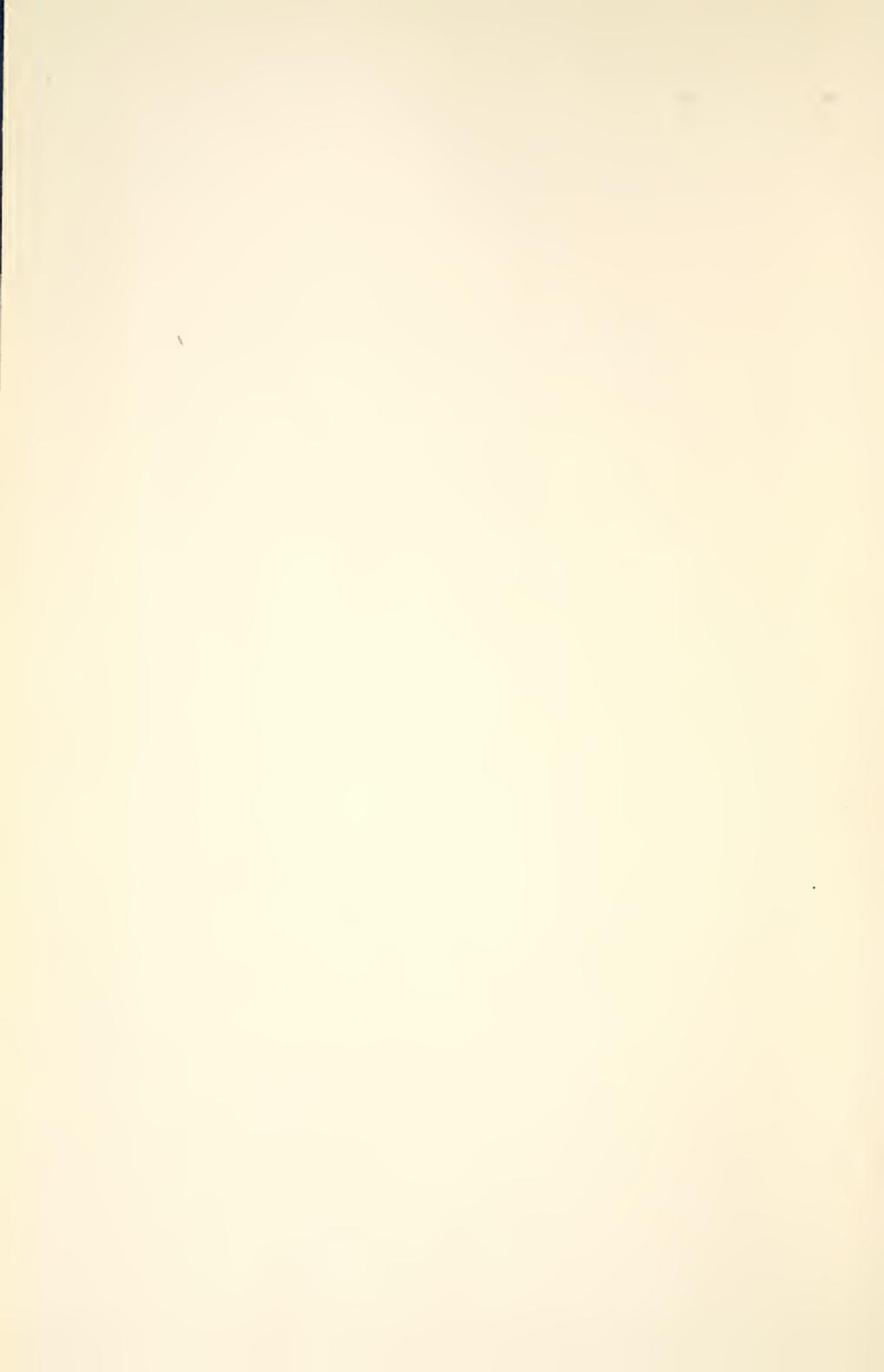
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*Career Women of America*  
**1776-1840**

PI LAMBDA THETA  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN EDUCATION  
GRANTED THE  
ELLA VICTORIA DOBBS AWARD  
IN 1949  
TO THE UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT OF  
*Career Women of America, 1776-1840*

# *Career Women of America*

## *1776-1840*

by

**ELISABETH ANTHONY DEXTER**  
author of *Colonial Women of Affairs*



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ELISABETH ANTHONY DEXTER



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To

MARGARET BINGHAM STILLWELL

CURATOR OF THE

ANNMARY BROWN MEMORIAL

COUSIN FRIEND HELPER AND EXEMPLAR

WITH MY LOVE

PRO HART



## *Preface*

This book, intended as a continuation of my earlier study of women in colonial days, was started more than twenty years ago, but work on it has twice been interrupted. As I spent most of the time from 1941 to '48 in Europe, some secondary books on the subject which were published in the United States in that period may well have escaped my attention.

During these checkered years I have accumulated a number of pleasant debts. The greatest debt in any work of this kind is to the people, known and unknown, who create good libraries and make them available. It would be tedious to name all places where I have found material, but I would like to thank particularly the staffs of the Library of Harvard University and of the Boston and the Providence Atheneums.

I am extremely grateful to Pi Lambda Theta for the gracious and heartening grant of the Ella Victoria Dobbs Award in 1949. My friends Irene Armstrong and Hazel Ridout have given practical help on many occasions. Most of all I owe to my husband Robert C. Dexter and to my son Lewis for encouragement and suggestions. A book in process of being written is an uncomfortable guest, and but for my husband's sympathy and patience this one would long ago have been abandoned. My son, who has contributed a *Comment* on some sociological aspects of my study, has prodded me when I flagged, given stimulating criticism, and called my attention to many sources of information which I would otherwise have overlooked.

I have tried to give an objective presentation of the facts as I found them, with a minimum of explanation and generalization; but opinions, clearly labelled I trust, have now and then broken through. That these opinions are always justi-

fied would be too much to hope. I would ask the reader to remember, however, that I am writing here about *American women between 1776 and 1840, only*, and that an opinion about the situation there and then does not necessarily apply to other times and places.

This study is offered as a small contribution to an understanding of our past, in the belief that the more fully and fairly we achieve this understanding, the better we are equipped to face our future.

E.A.D.

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## *Introduction*

I never was of the opinion that the pursuits of the sexes ought to be the same. . . . Yet to cultivate the qualities with which we are endowed can never be called infringing the prerogatives of man. Why, my dear Cousin, were we furnished with such powers unless the improvement of them could conduce to the happiness of society? Do you suppose the mind of woman the only work of God that was "made in vain?" . . . Women would be under the same degree of subordination that they are now; enlighten and expand their minds, and they will perceive the necessity of such a regulation to preserve the order and happiness of society.

Eliza Southgate, the eighteen-year old author of these reflections written in 1801, put in a nutshell an attitude which became increasingly common in the early nineteenth century. Forty years later so independent a person as Catherine Beecher wrote in ardent lip-service to this ideal:

But if females as they approach the other sex in intellectual elevation, began to claim . . . the peculiar prerogatives of that sex, education would prove a doubtful and dangerous blessing. But this will never be the result. For the more intelligent a woman becomes, the more she can appreciate the wisdom of the ordinance that appointed her subordinate station, and the more her tastes will conform to the graceful and dignified retirement and submission it involves.

These sentiments would have sounded almost as odd in colonial days as they do now, although not for the same reasons. Women's sphere was not a subject of controversy or reflection in pioneer America. Men ruled in church and state, and they furnished the great majority of workers in practi-

cally all callings outside the home. Yet, as evidence presented in the writer's *Colonial Women of Affairs* indicates, women pursued a surprising number of occupations, and their doing so caused little comment. The woman merchant, hotel keeper, teacher or printer before 1776 did her work without apology or apparent sense of restriction, and she was judged by her achievements. A few exceptional and perhaps misunderstood cases have obscured this fact. Anne Hutchinson, it is true, was hounded out of Massachusetts Bay Colony; but she was persecuted with more venom than her fellow heretics not because she was a woman, but because her heresy was more popular and therefore more dangerous than theirs.

What was the situation by 1800? Or by 1840? Were the opportunities open to women more limited? Or were the women who protested their love of subordination really beginning to chafe under restrictions of which they had not been conscious earlier? The present study was undertaken in the hope of answering these questions, if possible, and at any rate of learning something about the ways in which women of the early Republic could earn a living or pursue a career.

The material for this study is far more abundant than for the colonial period, at least in bulk — the haystacks multiplied more rapidly than the needles. It deals, of course, with more people — the population more than quadrupled between 1776 and 1840. Printed matter had increased even faster — newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books of local history, memoirs and travel, from which come the flesh and blood as well as the dry bones of history. Modern secondary works also are more numerous, and a greater number of the women in whom I am interested are already fairly well known. It may seem unnecessary to devote space to women like Emma Willard and Mary Lyon, for example, good biographies of whom are readily accessible. An argument for omitting them is that the little people, like the Cambridge teacher Mrs. Hurley, were far more typical and are individually quite unknown. On the other hand, the Emma Willards

and the Mary Lyons had more influence on their own and succeeding generations than a thousand Mrs. Hurleys.

I have made a somewhat arbitrary compromise, omitting some famous women entirely, especially if their careers extended well beyond 1840. Other such women are presented in rapid outline only, while some little known women, no more or even less important, are given in fuller detail. Such for example are those two very different authors, Susannah Rowson and Anne Royall; two biographies have been written about one, and several monographs about the other, but these are not accessible to the general reader. Susannah Rowson remains merely a name, and no one of the friends whom I have cross-examined, some of them historians, had ever heard of that doughty spirit Anne Royall.

In the same way, some fields of women's activities here covered are much better known than others. Many books have been written, for instance, about the schools and teachers of the early nineteenth century. But no balanced picture of women's work could be given which omitted teaching. Furthermore, the books referred to look at the subject from a different point of view from mine. Practically all the many studies which I have read consider primarily the *kind of education* open to girls rather than the *kind of opportunities which teaching offered to women*. Similarly, there are a number of books dealing with the development of the American theater, to some of which I am greatly indebted; but my interest is focused not on the stage but on the actress. The two points of view supplement each other, but the emphasis here throughout is on the producer, the doer, rather than on the product and the deed done. In technical terms, this is a study in the history, and a contribution to the sociology, of women's professional life.



*Career Women of America*  
**1776-1840**



## CHAPTER I

### *"Pouring the Fresh Instruction O'er the Mind"*

Eunice, why does thee not open a school? Thee knows the verbs and the articles, and I will come once a week and do the whipping.

This advice, given by a Nantucket Quakeress to her daughter early in the nineteenth century, indicates the modest standard of preparation asked of a woman teacher of that day.<sup>1</sup> The work was respectable, and it required little capital. To some women, there was an added appeal which Lucy Larcom expressed thus:<sup>2</sup>

It had been impressed upon me that I must make myself useful in the world, and certainly one could be useful who could "keep school" as Aunt Hannah did. I did not see anything else for a girl to do who wanted to use her brains as well as her hands.

Before the Revolution, women had been established as teachers for children of both sexes up to seven or possibly ten years of age — as private governess, teacher of a charity school, or most often in the little privately supported "dame school." In addition, women furnished most of the inadequate instruction which older girls received. Those from well-to-do families went to finishing schools in the larger cities. Many, but not all, towns provided girls with some education, not free but at a low rate. In the country this was generally offered in a summer session taught by a woman. Before 1776, a few towns had found that women were capable of teaching the winter session also, which boys attended, but until well into the nineteenth century most school committees acted on the opinion expressed by that of Ware, Massachusetts, that<sup>3</sup>

females [are] of too delicate a texture for the rudeness and consequential importance of boys of fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen years of age. . . . Their fitness to instruct girls of any age and boys under ten, they do not question.

The years from 1776 to 1840 brought a marked improvement in general educational standards, and particularly in the kind and amount of schooling open to girls. This subject, interesting and significant as it is, can be considered here only as it affected women teachers. In brief, their status rose greatly, both in the number and kind of positions open to them.

As schools became more numerous, the families employing a governess became fewer, relatively if not absolutely. Yet private instruction continued to be fairly common, particularly in the South. The information available about governesses is meagre. Occasionally one advertised for a place. For example, a "young lady" of Washington announced in 1821 that she was qualified to teach "English Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography with use of the Globes and Maps, History, Belles Lettres, Music and Drawing."<sup>4</sup> A humbler "Middle-aged Female," also of Washington, added to a similar card that she was capable of doing any needlework required in a family.<sup>5</sup>

Private teachers were not unknown in the North. In a letter to a niece, on August 13, 1814, Miss Mary Byles of Boston wrote:

A short time since, your old friend Miss Betsy Abraham called to see us, both her parents and her brother are dead & she has been for some time trying to have a school in Boston or obtain a sufficient support for herself by fine needle work, but not succeeding in her wishes she has accepted an invitation from a respectable family in the state of New York to educate two or three of their children.

Going as governess was apparently a last resort for Miss Abraham, and such positions must have had drawbacks. Yet Harriet Martineau, the British traveler, stated that a particularly accomplished governess who would promise to teach everything might earn \$600 a year in the family of a

southern planter — less in the North.<sup>6</sup> In view of what women earned in other forms of teaching the figure seems extremely high, and it was probably exceptional.

Plenty of information is forthcoming about the teachers of "dame schools." Miss Larcom has given a charming portrait of one:<sup>7</sup>

The school was kept by a neighbor whom everybody called "Aunt Hannah." It took in all the little ones about us, no matter how young they were provided they could walk and talk, and were considered capable of learning their letters....

Aunt Hannah used her kitchen or her sitting room for a school room as suited her convenience.... We were delighted observers of her culinary operations and other employments. If a baby's head nodded a little a bed was made for it on a soft "comforter" in the corner, where it had its nap out undisturbed. But this did not often happen; there were so many interesting things going on that we seldom became sleepy. Aunt Hannah was very kind and motherly, but she kept us in fear of her ferule, which indicated the possibility of smarting palms.... [Stupid boys had to sit on a block for punishment]. Stupid little girls received a different treatment.... an occasional rap on the head, with the teacher's thimble, accompanied by an impatient, half-whispered ejaculation, which sounded very much like "Numbskull!" I think this was a rare occurrence, however, for she was a good-natured, much enduring woman.

I began to go to school when I was about two years old, as other children about us did. [The dame was not supposed to do much more than keep these little ones out of mischief.].... But I learned my letters in a few days, standing at Aunt Hannah's knee while she pointed them out to me in the spelling book with a pin, skipping over the 'a b abs' into words of one or two syllables, thence taking a flying leap into the New Testament, in which there is concurrent family testimony that I was reading at the age of two and a half.... [I still have] a vision of Aunt Hannah's somewhat sternly smiling lips, with her spectacles just above them, far down on her nose, encouraging me to pronounce the hard words.

Not all school dames were as lovable as Aunt Hannah, but pleasant references in books of reminiscence and local history

show that many of them were held in kind remembrance by their former pupils.

The dame school prepared children for the regular public classes. As towns began to assume the responsibility for primary education, the dame school became less common, but it did not disappear until well after 1840.

The city of Boston established primary classes in 1818. The rules regarding them (printed in 1838) implied that the teachers would be women, for Rule 1, Section IV, provided, among other things, that no person appointed as teacher "shall enter upon her duties until she has made herself acquainted with the system and mode of instruction in the model school." It was further laid down that all teachers should get the same pay, (\$250), and that they should not take any remuneration from the pupils. They were also forbidden to be "employed with the needle or other work during school hours, except in pursuance of their school duties." In 1848 a list of the schools, with the names of the teachers, was published. There were one hundred and twelve schools (twelve of them checked as intermediate) each with one teacher, — all women. Eleven of the names carried the prefix "Mrs."<sup>8</sup>

The situation in regard to town schooling for girls beyond the primary grade was confused. Northampton, Massachusetts, was fined in 1788 for failing to provide any teaching at all for girls; and, unrepentant, it voted in 1818 "that this town shall not be at any expense for schooling girls."<sup>9</sup> The town fathers of Gloucester, on the other hand, decided in 1790: "Females . . . are a tender and interesting branch of the community but have been much neglected in the Public Schools in this Town."<sup>10</sup> This attitude slowly gained ground. In many places the school-master held classes for girls at an hour when boys were not present, and in other towns they were admitted to share the instruction given to boys. A growing proportion of these towns entrusted the teaching to women.

Still other towns had separate classes taught by women. The

following advertisement appeared in the *Albany Gazette* for August 5, 1796:

Albany City School

Wanted, a Female Teacher of a School for the Education of Girls in the English Language, and Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic, and plain Sewing. The salary is 250 dollars per annum, to be paid quarterly, and the school is to be holden in a room provided by the Trustees.

As to the appointment, respect will be had only to the testimonials of a good moral character, and to the qualifications of those who make application, they must attend in person, with necessary certificates, at the school room, on the first day of September, at 10 o'clock a.m.

Until well into the nineteenth century, it was customary in country districts for a woman to teach the summer session, open to girls and boys, while in the winter a master gave most if not all his attention to boys. A book called *The District School as It Was, by One Who Went To It*, published in 1850, gives a candid picture of education in a small New England town.<sup>11</sup> The author, Warren Burton, says that owing to the lack of an older brother or sister to take him to school, he remained in ignorance until the advanced age of three and a half. Then came two blissful summers under the instruction of Mary Smith. She seems to have been as kind and resourceful as Miss Larcom's Aunt Hannah, and she was young and beautiful: no wonder he lost his heart! The winter sessions, under the minister, were less happy, and the third summer brought an awful change. Mehitable Holt, the new teacher,

kept order, for her punishments were horrible, especially to us little ones. She dungeoned us in the windowless closet just for a whisper. . . . If we were restless on our seats, wearied of our position, fretted by the heat, or sick of the unintelligible lesson, a twist of the ear, or a snap on the head from her thimbled finger, reminded us that sitting perfectly still was the most important virtue of a little boy in school. . . . Mehitable was, on the whole, popular with the parents. She kept us still, and forced us to get our lessons, and that was something uncommon in a mistress.

[Other teachers of the summer session] were none of them like Mehitable in severity, nor all of them equal to her in usefulness, and none of them equal in any respect to Mary Smith. Some were young, scarcely sixteen, . . . Some kept tolerable order; others made the attempt, but did not succeed; others did not even make the attempt. All would doubtless have done better, had they been properly educated and disciplined themselves.

Few women of his time, indeed, were "properly educated." During the eighteenth century girls could not get much more academic instruction than these meagre country schools provided; the private schools furnished little but "ornamental" subjects. Hence the teacher of fifteen or sixteen had already received all the preparation open to her. After 1800, more advanced work was provided for women, — slowly, and here and there. In the course of a few decades, this meant a fair number of better trained teachers. It meant also that many country teachers were girls aware of their ignorance, and eager to save out of their tiny salaries to pay for further education. Men in those days commonly regarded a few years of pedagogy as a stepping stone to college, and a career as a minister or lawyer. Similarly, a large number of the women who attained distinction during the second and third quarters of the 19th century served their apprenticeship by some years of teaching in country schools.

Lucy Stone, for example, began to teach in 1834, when sixteen years old. At first she received \$1.00 a week, and "boarded around." She soon became known as a successful teacher, and was put in charge of larger schools, with a corresponding raise in salary until she reached \$16 a month — an unusually good rate for a woman in the country. Yet it is hardly surprising that it took her nine years to save enough money to start her course at Oberlin College, recently opened to men and women on equal terms.<sup>12</sup>

Susan B. Anthony, born in 1820, had the advantage of a father more sympathetic to female education, and also in better circumstances than Lucy Stone's father. She began in a country school with the usual arrangement of men in

winter and women in summer. None of them "could teach Susan long division or understand why a girl should insist on learning it." Dissatisfied with the district school, Mr. Anthony arranged for a little private school which his own and some neighbors' children attended, and where, no doubt, long division was taught. As soon as Susan and her sister became fifteen, each in turn taught a summer session. Their father was criticized for allowing this, since he was well off; but he believed that they should know how to support themselves.

In the early winter of 1837, Susan went to teach in a family where she received \$1 a week and her board. The next summer she took a district school, receiving what she considered excellent wages of \$1.50 a week, and "boarding around." That autumn, she joined her older sister in attending boarding school, but the failure of their father's business made it necessary for them to go to teaching again. Susan's first position, in Union Village, now Greenwich, New York, was not promising: "I found school small and quite disorderly. O, may my patience hold out to persevere without intermission." She taught almost constantly in such schools until 1845, receiving only \$2 to \$2.50 a week and board. Her biographer wrote that she saw with indignation the injustice practised toward women. Repeatedly she would take a school which a male teacher had been obliged to give up because of inefficiency, and although she made a thorough success, would receive only one quarter of his salary. It was the custom to pay men four times the wages of women for exactly the same amount of work, often not so well done.<sup>13</sup>

There is no reason to suppose that the average woman teacher was superior to the average man; according to any modern standards nearly all teachers of the day were shockingly ignorant, and many were unbearably severe. There is plenty of evidence, however, that men received from two to four times as much pay as women for substantially the same work.

George Combe, the Scottish phrenologist who travelled

in the United States from 1838 to 1840, inspected the schools wherever he went. He figured that in Massachusetts men averaged \$185.28 a year above their board, and women \$64.56 — sums which he felt were criminally low in a country where the ordinary laborer received \$1 a day. The difference in the figure for men and women may account for the fact that there were then (1838) 3591 women to 2370 men in the public schools throughout the state.<sup>14</sup> Many towns, evidently, had overcome their fears for the delicate texture of the female teacher.

Combe noted with disappointment that the state made no provision for the education of girls beyond the common schools. There were about eighty seminaries and colleges in Massachusetts for men, many of them well endowed, and all aided by the state. But not a single seminary, he said, had been "endowed or permanently established by legislative liberality for the education of young women in the superior walks of knowledge." [Actually, Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary had been started, with a very small endowment, a few months earlier.]

The educational situation was no worse, Combe admitted, than in Great Britain, but he regarded it as more serious, because in the United States "the fathers are too busy to devote proper attention to the education of their children" and hence more responsibility fell on the mothers. He was glad to note that a number of prominent Boston women were quite aware of the danger and were trying to bring about an improvement.

Combe began his travels in Massachusetts. As he went to other parts of the country, he found the schools worse rather than better. Pennsylvania, he was told, had been particularly backward, but a great improvement had come in the last two or three years. At the close of 1835 there had been (excluding private schools) 762 common schools, with seventeen academies — some half dead — and "no female seminary fostered by the state." By the time of his visit, there

were 5000 common schools, 38 academies for boys, and 7 for girls.<sup>15</sup>

American critics as well as visitors from Europe condemned the existing state of education; and improvement had already begun. Horace Mann had started on his epoch-making task as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837. The first normal school for training teachers in the United States opened its doors, in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1839. These events were to have far reaching influence.

Private schools of the "finishing" variety, most of them limited to the study of needlework, music, and deportment, had been common in the larger towns before the Revolution. As wealth and population increased, they became more numerous and ambitious. The amount of evidence in regard to them is embarrassing. They advertised, freely and fulsomely, travelers and local historians commemorated the better known mistresses, and letters and diaries made frequent reference to them. Only a fraction of the available material can be even suggested here.

The seaboard towns of New England were prosperous in the years around 1800, and select schools flourished accordingly. Rev. William Bentley noted in his diary:

We have an immense number of schools in Salem . . . many schools kept by females for the instruction of young ladies, among which Mrs. Higginson and daughter and Mrs. Rogers rank first.

Dr. Bentley gave considerable information about Mrs. Rogers. In 1793, after mentioning that Mr. Rogers had been made master of the Salem Grammar School, he said of Mrs. Rogers:

She possesses the best education of our New England families, with a steady and firm temper, and has had the greatest applause in the education of our daughters, of which [sic] she has instructed 60 at one time.

Mrs. Rogers had need of firmness, for in 1799 she was left a widow, with four small children to support. Her school was so popular, however, that she could charge more than

the usual rate and still not lack for pupils. Throughout the year 1801 she suffered persecution for a curious cause. An anonymous writer in the *Salem Gazette* stated that Mrs. Rogers had "instructed her female pupils in the art of skating." Although "this absolute falsehood" was promptly contradicted, it was bandied about and widely believed, to the disrepute of Salem. Great excitement resulted there. Bentley wrote indignantly that it might "deprive a widow and her four children of subsistence," but Mrs. Rogers' reputation stood too high to be seriously affected.<sup>16</sup>

An even better-known New England school was that presided over by English-born Susannah Rowson. Mrs. Rowson had an unusual career, and her achievements as novelist and actress will be noted in later chapters. The disapproval which New England families might have felt toward an ex-actress seems to have been overcome by Mrs. Rowson's having once been governess to the children of the famous Duchess of Devonshire. Early in 1798, she assumed the management of a school in Medford, Massachusetts, formerly conducted by a Mr. and Mrs. Wyman. In 1807 she moved to Boston, first to Washington Street, and two years later to a house she bought on Hollis Street, where she stayed until her death in 1824.<sup>17</sup> The Misses Mary and Catherine Byles, genteel maiden ladies whose sprightly correspondence has fortunately been preserved, were her neighbors there, and in 1816 one of them wrote to a niece:

Invited and drank tea at Mrs. Rowson's who owns a very pretty house on Hollis Street. She is an Englishwoman and keeps a very genteel academy for young ladies; she has written some very good things both entertaining and moral.

Mrs. Rowson was a personage and many recollections of her have been preserved. The best picture of her as a teacher comes from the pen of the youthful letter-writer, Eliza Southgate of Scarborough, Maine. Eliza, aged fourteen, began her boarding-school experience in the autumn of 1797 at the Wymans' school. She detested Mrs. Wyman and was so unhappy that she begged her parents to let her change at the

end of the term. Fortunately the management changed, and with the advent of Mrs. Rowson everything was altered. On February 13, 1798, she wrote:

Honoured Father:

I am again placed at school under the tuition of an amiable lady, so mild, so good, no one can help loving her; she treats all her school with such tenderness as would win the affection of the most savage brute, tho' scarce able to receive an impression of the kind. I learn Embroidery and Geography at present and wish your permission to learn Musick.

(Here follows a vicious little sketch of Mrs. Wyman — "one of the worst of creation," which need not be quoted further.)

Eliza's "finishing" was considered complete by the spring of 1800, but her younger sister Octavia continued at Mrs. Rowson's, and letters between the sisters contained messages to and from the head mistress. Once Eliza was really annoyed with her; on July 3, 1800, she wrote to her mother:

I don't know what I shall do about writing Octavia, as Mrs. Rowson told her I wrote on an improper subject, when I asked in my letter if Mr. Davis was paying attention to Eleanor Coffin, and she would not let her answer the question. This is *refining* too much.

Eliza's irritation did not last long. In September Octavia seems to have been straining at the leash, and Eliza gave her good advice:<sup>18</sup>

A boarding school, I know, my dear sister, is not like home, but reflect a moment, is it not necessary, *absolutely necessary*, to be more strict in the government of twenty or thirty young ladies nearly of an age and different dispositions, than a private family? Your good sense will tell you it is. . . . Surely, Octavia, you must allow that no woman was ever better calculated to govern a school than Mrs. Rowson. . . .

Here followed messages to Miss Haskell, an assistant teacher of whom Eliza was fond. She then continued:

My love and esteem ever await our good Mrs. Rowson, and hope she does not intend my last letter shall go unanswered.

This "genteel academy" was famous and expensive. The Misses Byles give considerable information about a more

typical day-school for younger children. As their letters show, they had become very friendly with a delicate English widow named Hurley, who was struggling to bring up three young children on a small pension. On September 20, 1799, Catherine wrote to her, in "West Boston" (i.e., Cambridge.)

Would you feel yourself equal to undertake the care of a small school? This you know might be effected in a chamber and might be entered upon with a very trifling [sic] charge. Your own little ones might be entered with the rest and save the expense of their own schooling, and you would have something coming in from your own industry which, with your month's pay, might place you in much easier circumstances. I only propose, what think you of the plan?

Apparently Mrs. Hurley thought well of it, for within a month the Boston papers were carrying the following card:<sup>19</sup>

Ladies' School — Cambridge.

Mrs. Hurley, late from London, respectfully acquaints the inhabitants of Cambridge, and its Vicinity, That she has Opened a School, for the instruction of Young Ladies; next door to the Church, on the Green, near the University.

She will instruct in Reading, Writing, & Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography, & History, with Rudiments of the French Language.

All kinds of Needlework, Tambour, Embroidery, & Drawing, upon very moderate Terms.

She presumes, that by an unremitting [sic] diligence, she  
shall merit the favour of all those who  
honour her with the care of their children.

The Terms, are from Three to Six Dollars per quarter.

All kinds of Needlework and Millinery shall be done, in  
the newest taste, with elegance and despatch.

Diligence, certainly, was not lacking; and the experiment evidently answered. In the following June, Mary Byles reported to a niece:

Mrs. Hurley, after passing through a variety of distresses, now occupies a chamber in Rowe's Lane, opposite Revd Dr. Parker's. She is keeping a school for small children has several very respectable scholars, and is at present more comfortable than she has been for some time.

Similar reports, too numerous for full quotation, followed at frequent intervals. A gift of cloth for some dresses for Mrs. Hurley's daughter brought out the fact that Catherine, then about six and a half years old,

begins to be quite useful to her Mama, and assists her with plain sewing which she occasionally takes in towards the support of her family.

In the spring of 1805, Mrs. Hurley had sixteen girls at \$3 a quarter, besides orders for sewing, and Miss Byles wrote: "With *good Oeconomy* I think she will make a comfortable living."

In February, 1806, Mrs. Hurley was hurrying to finish some work "for one of the Miss Higginson's who is going to get married." Yet her school did not suffer, for in the following February she had twenty-eight pupils, "a tolerable number for this time of the winter." In September of that year (1807) the Misses Byles were greatly pleased by an exhibition, consisting of tableaux of the adventures of the infant Moses, given by Mrs. Hurley's pupils:

Her school continues to flourish, she has removed . . . to [a house] on the Main Street. She is up two pairs of stairs where she has a pleasant sizeable room for her school, and a small one for her bed. She occasionally continues her fine work and is now teaching it to some of her schollars.

In 1809, Mrs. Hurley engaged a young man as part-time assistant. In 1811 Miss Byles reported: "She and her children are well; she continues to have a respectable school & her spirits are very good." There was a reason for the good spirits, which Miss Byles learned and reported in the next letter — Mrs. Hurley was going to marry the assistant, Mr. Baker. He was several years younger than the lady, and the Byles sisters scarcely knew him. Although "the affair has been in agitation for more than a year, it was by *meer accident* that we discovered it some weeks ago." Considering their years of devoted friendship, one can hardly blame the Misses Byles for a shade of pique — they *hoped* the marriage would turn out well! When it did, they admitted the fact with real

pleasure; Mr. Baker proved a good husband and step-father. A little Baker girl arrived in 1813, but the school was maintained for some years longer.<sup>20</sup>

These school mistresses have been seen through the eyes of friends, and their portraits, painted in diaries or in familiar letters, are spontaneous and sincere. The portraits drawn by the ladies themselves in advertisements sometimes suggest a chilling perfection. Miss Joanna Haskell, for example, who had been an assistant first under Mrs. Wyman and later under Mrs. Rowson, announced in the Boston papers for 1800, that she was opening a seminary at Woburn, where she pledged herself<sup>21</sup>

to improve the Morals, expand the Ideas, meliorate the Manners, and attend to the Neatness and Health of the Young Ladies under her care.

Or there was the unnamed lady in Richmond, Virginia, "wife of a clergyman of the Episcopal Church." In the *Examiner* for May 19, 1801 she announced:

She proposes to teach plain work, embroidery, Dresden, and every fashionable accomplishment of this description; also the French Language, of which (with deference) she presumes she possesses a competent knowledge. Parents may be assured that every possible attention will be paid to the morals of their children; with an ardent hope they may be (when their education is completed) at least distinguished for their reverence for *Religion* and their *exemplary deportment*.

The proprietors of a school in Georgia were no more diffident. Their announcement in 1795 ran as follows:<sup>22</sup>

#### EDUCATION for Young Ladies in Augusta

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought  
To teach the young idea how to shoot,  
And pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Sandwich have the pleasure of informing their friends and the public, that by the acquisition of Mr. and Mrs. Lubbock, they are enabled to add music and

French to the sciences; and can now vie with the world in a compleat system of Literature.

Mrs. Sandwich advertised frequently, sometimes with her husband, sometimes alone, but always in complacent vein.

Not all teachers were so confident or effusive. Mrs. Wilkins, at "no. 2, Meeting-street," Charleston, gave notice that she<sup>23</sup>

intends opening a school for the education of young children, in reading and needle-work, having no other method to provide for herself and eight children; . . . She solicits the patronage of the public and assures them that every exertion in her power will be used to do strict justice.

There was perhaps more pride than modesty in the statement of Eliza Richardson of Richmond, gratefully acknowledging "the encouragement she had met with as a teacher for thirty years past":<sup>24</sup>

She teaches neither Tambour, Painting, or the Use of the Globes, but she can teach to SPELL with propriety, to READ with Judgement, to WRITE intelligibly, and to MAKE UP LINEN & MARK it as it should be — Humble qualifications, but very useful in all families.

There was diffidence and good sense in the announcement in 1821 of a school to be opened in Essex County, Virginia, by Mrs. James M. Garnett:<sup>25</sup>

She is fully sensible of her own and her daughters' incompetence to bestow such an education as she sincerely desires to see within the reach of every individual of her sex among the rising generation. Yet, having devoted the greater part of her life to the instruction of her own large family, she trusts that this experience will in some degree qualify her for the office of instructress, especially to those of her own sex. . . . Her chief object and anxious endeavor will be to bestow an education rather useful than showy . . . to prepare them for the faithful discharge of those arduous duties which necessarily devolve upon every mistress of a family, particularly in the Southern States.

The course of instruction will consist in teaching Reading, English Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic, comprehending such a knowledge of accounts as every lady should possess; together with Geography, and the use of the Globes.

Also Belles Lettres, the Elements of Chemistry, of Natural and Moral Philosophy, the Latin, French and Italian Languages; with such a course of Historical reading as will furnish the Scholars with a good general idea of the principal events of the world.

For this ambitious program the price, to include all the subjects and complete board, was only \$200:

No difference in the price of tuition will be made between those who may endeavor to learn all the above branches of education and those who may attempt only two or three of such as are deemed most easy to acquire, because the same time and attention will be devoted to the last as to the first.

This reasonable provision was unusual, and the program was practically unique in saying nothing about needlework. It is pleasant to know that the school achieved a considerable reputation.

In most boarding schools, manners and "ornamental branches" remained the chief stock in trade, as they had been in colonial days; but increasing attention was given, at least on paper, to academic subjects. Foreign languages were popular, and the French Revolution sent to this country a number of exiles who were eager to teach them. The *Centennial History of Washington*, D. C., mentioned a school taught by Madame du Cheray, a French lady just arrived from Moscow, where she had been at the head of an academy under the patronage of the Emperor Alexander. She was prepared to give instruction in<sup>26</sup>

English, French, history, geography, mythology, writing, arithmetic, embroidery, all sorts of needle-work, drawing, music, and dancing, and miniature portrait painting.

Satan could have found no employment for Mme. du Cheray, nor yet for Miss Parker of Norridgewock, Maine, who advertised that she would teach<sup>27</sup>

the English studies generally, the French, Spanish, and Latin languages, Projecting and Painting (water colours), Japaning, Painting Honfleur Style; Plain sewing; Lace, Bead, and Rug work.

It is difficult to say how much financial reward a school-

mistress received. Miss Martineau believed that a competent woman could "realize an independence in a few years by school-keeping in the North," and the evidence found supports that conclusion — if "independence" is understood in a modest sense. Some southern schools seem to have been equally successful; but with fewer towns and more reliance on resident governesses, there were not so many of them.

All the private schools considered so far were strictly personal ventures, in which everything depended on the owner-mistress. When she died or retired, her assistants as well as her pupils had to go elsewhere. During the early nineteenth century, a number of the better private schools established trustees or other outside management, which assured an existence not wholly dependent on the life of the head mistress. This was an important step along the path to solid education.

Two special classes of schools, a few examples of which had been established even before 1800, had this continuity: first, charity day schools, under a local committee; and second, boarding schools managed by a religious order or denominational board. The Massachusetts Charitable Society was caring for the education of "poor female children" as early as 1789, and the New York Female Association was founded for the same purpose a few years later. By 1830 such societies were fairly common, and they afforded activity to a number of public-spirited women. Usually the society paid the salary of a woman teacher; sometimes members of the society taught without pay. The Charleston Infant School Society, for example, founded in 1829, appropriated \$300 as a salary for the "instructress" Mrs. Kerrison, with permission for her to retain \$100 more from the children's tuition money "if so much be collected." Since the tuition was  $6\frac{1}{4}$  cents per week, or half that if there were more than one child in a family, one may doubt that Mrs. Kerrison received the supplement. Few such schools survived the middle of the century, for by that time the children of the poor were receiving completely free tax-supported education.<sup>28</sup>

The earliest and one of the best known of the religious boarding schools was the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans, founded by French nuns in 1727. Nazareth Academy, another prominent school, was started in 1808 by nuns near Bardstown, Kentucky, — then a frontier settlement. Several other schools were established by the French nun, Rosa Philippine Duchesne, who came as a pioneer to the New World of the recently organized "Society of the Sacred Heart." With four companions she arrived in New Orleans in 1818, and within a few years she had opened boarding schools for the daughters of frontiersmen and planters, at St. Charles, Missouri, and at Grand Couteau and St. Michael, Louisiana. Like the Ursuline Convent, these schools drew pupils, Protestant as well as Catholic, from a wide radius. In addition, the dynamic Frenchwoman started several day schools, one of which is credited with being the first *free* school west of the Mississippi, and also classes for Indian girls and for Negroes.<sup>29</sup>

Protestant denominations also had their schools. The Moravian Brethren started one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1749, which like the Ursulines became famous and attracted pupils from a distance. When Eliza Southgate visited Bethlehem in August, 1803, she reported that the school had eighty-three girls from four to sixteen years old, drawn from Montreal to Georgia. She commented on the peculiar white uniform worn by the teachers. Like all visitors, she admired the neatness of everything, and the beautiful embroidery made by the pupils. The excellence of the music also received praise.<sup>30</sup>

In 1802 the Moravians founded Salem Female Academy in South Carolina, called by Thomas Woody the first exclusively female seminary (i.e., incorporated institution) in the country. The first principal was Reverend Samuel G. Kramisch, and his wife and nine other women taught in the school during the first few years. Maria Steiner, who came in 1811, remained until her marriage in 1828, and then returned later to teach French, which she had studied abroad meanwhile.<sup>31</sup>

An early school under Methodist auspices which achieved distinction was Elizabeth Academy, in Washington, Missouri, incorporated in 1819. Although the president was a man, the weight of instruction fell on the "governess," a lady who according to the by-laws must be "pious, learned, and of a grave and dignified deportment." The second governess, Mrs. C. M. Thayer, wrote a full and interesting account of her term of office, 1825 to 1832. She was a woman of personality, long remembered as an extraordinary teacher. She kept abreast of educational ideas, and gave attention to classification and to the health of pupils — two marked innovations. The claim has been advanced that Elizabeth Academy was "a college in all but name," and the first genuine college for girls. Although this claim is not generally accepted, it seems to have been a very good school. The location, however, was unfortunate: the town dwindled in size, and the academy went out of existence in 1843.<sup>32</sup>

The first half of the nineteenth century was the heyday of the denominational boarding school, and it would be tedious to list even a tenth of them. The principal was often a clergyman, but in schools for girls women usually did the bulk of the teaching. As public high schools became common, these boarding schools diminished in importance, and many of them disappeared. Some still flourish, however, and some have been transformed into colleges.

Anyone reviewing the education of women in the United States would doubtless say that the greatest achievement was the provision of university education. That is a story outside the scope of the present study — the first bachelor's degree was awarded to a woman at Oberlin in 1841, and until after the Civil War the colleges which would admit women could be counted on the fingers. But colleges for women would have been useless without schools in which girls could prepare for college. In even the best of the schools so far noted, this would scarcely have been possible. The creation of adequate preparatory schools was the great achievement of the

earlier period, and it required at least equal devotion, sacrifice and vision.

The movement which led to good secondary schools and finally to higher education can be traced back to the late eighteenth century. A group of well-known men, such as Benjamin Rush, DeWitt Clinton, and T. H. Gallaudet, contributed to it by their personal influence and by their writings. Their prestige helped to give standing, but the task of bringing their ideas to reality was chiefly carried out by a group of enlightened and devoted women working in private schools.<sup>33</sup>

One of the earliest of these women was Miss Sarah Pierce of Litchfield, Connecticut, who is said to have started with one pupil, in 1792. Her school grew rapidly, and in 1827 it was incorporated as Litchfield Academy. In 1833 (shortly after her retirement) the trustees reported that in most years the school had had pupils from at least one half the states of the Union, and that the enrollment varied from eighty to one hundred and thirty. It was never a boarding school in the usual sense. Miss Pierce built a new house in 1803, and after that she took a few pupils in her own family; but most of the girls boarded with families in the town.

Miss Pierce must have encouraged her students to keep diaries. At any rate, a number of such diaries have been found and published in the interesting *Chronicles of a Pioneer School* and *More Chronicles*. From these one gains a picture of a diversified and happy school life. An unusual amount of attention was given to history and geography. There was time and inclination for reading. Balls (which closed at ten o'clock) were frequent. An observer mentioned "the daily procession of school girls taking their exercise to the sound of the flute and flageolet."

The excellence of Miss Pierce's teaching was widely recognized. In the words of the historian of Connecticut:

This school was for a long period the most celebrated in the United States, and brought together the most gifted and beautiful women of the continent. They were certain to be

methodically taught and tenderly cared for, and under her mild rule they could hardly fail to learn whatever was most necessary to fit them for the quiet but elevated spheres which so many of them have since adorned.<sup>34</sup>

Not all of the "spheres" were particularly quiet, for Catherine and Harriet Beecher were among the pupils. Catherine wrote in after years that Miss Pierce had a "relish for humor and fun that made her very lenient toward one who never was any special credit to her as a pupil." Whatever her achievements in school, Miss Beecher's great contribution to the education of women undoubtedly owed much to Miss Pierce's pioneering example.

The movement for better educational opportunities for girls was not confined to New England. In fact, Mrs. Blandin, the author of *The Higher Education of Women in the South Prior to 1860*, maintains that while in some parts of the country women had to fight for the right to an education

such was never the case in the South; for . . . men recognized their obligations to their daughters as well as to their sons, and schools for girls were established all over the South as soon as conditions would warrant their maintenance.

Mrs. Blandin believes that some of these were at least equal to the best northern schools of the time, if not a little in advance of them. The rather meagre information available does not quite warrant this conclusion, but it is evident that there were a number of excellent southern schools.<sup>35</sup>

Many other teachers, both North and South, made their contribution to the education of the future — a contribution now forgotten, perhaps, but not lost. Three women stand out above the rest — Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon. Limitation of space prevents consideration of these great teachers in anything like the detail they deserve, but information about them is readily available. Hence only a bare statement of their most outstanding achievements will be attempted here.

Emma Hart, later Mrs. Willard, began teaching in the summer of 1804 at the age of seventeen.<sup>36</sup> In 1806 she re-

ceived the honor of being put in charge of Berlin Academy for both the summer and winter sessions, but spring and fall she went to school herself. When she married Dr. John Willard of Middlebury, Vermont, in 1809, she gave up teaching, but her husband encouraged her to continue studying. A nephew lived with them while attending Middlebury College, and by studying his books she came to realize how far girls' schools fell short of the education open to men.

In 1814 Dr. Willard met with financial difficulties, and his wife opened a "female seminary." At first it was on conventional lines, but she tried to raise the level of instruction. The difficulties she encountered led her in 1819 to write *A Plan for Female Education*. Governor Clinton of New York, to whom the pamphlet was addressed, was greatly interested, and recommended that the legislature appropriate money to help found a school such as Mrs. Willard outlined. An act was passed granting a charter, but the endowment was refused. Thereupon the citizens of Troy came forward and raised enough money to buy and remodel a building suitable for the purpose. The "Troy Female Seminary" was opened in the fall of 1821, with ninety girls from seven states.

Mrs. Willard's work marked such an advance over anything known before that her pamphlet has appropriately been called the Magna Carta of women's education. In 1839 she turned the seminary over to her son and his wife, who continued at the head of it until 1872. Meanwhile Mrs. Willard worked with Henry Barnard to build up the public schools of Connecticut, and for several years she was superintendent of schools for the town of Kensington. She organized an association "for the mutual improvement of female teachers," and while at Troy she had been instrumental in founding a school for girls in Greece. She was a prolific writer, too, chiefly on educational subjects; and the familiar hymn, "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," is from her pen. She was deeply concerned with problems of peace and war, and she collaborated with Elihu Burritt in drawing up a plan for a league of nations. The school which she founded

has been renamed in her honor, and the "Emma Willard School" still stands in the forefront of academies for girls.

Catherine Beecher's fame has been eclipsed by that of her younger brother and sister; and her name is not so clearly linked with an existing institution as those of Mrs. Willard and Miss Lyon. Yet her influence entitles her to a high place in both these famous groups.<sup>37</sup>

Born in 1800, the eldest child of Lyman Beecher, she began teaching school at the age of nineteen to help balance the family budget. She was looking forward to marriage in a few years, as she was engaged to Alexander M. Fisher, a brilliant young instructor at Yale. Her fiancé's tragic death in a shipwreck lead to two important results. First, it reoriented her religion. Fisher, although of the highest character, had not "become a Christian," and the theology of the time assigned him to eternal punishment. After months of anguish, Catherine rejected this doctrine and brought herself to the conclusion that salvation was by character alone. Directly by her own writings, and still more by her influence on her preacher brothers, she made an important contribution to what Lyman Beecher Stowe has called "the Beechers' part in the transition from Heaven and theology to this world and service."

It was the second result of Fisher's death which concerns us here. Faced with the ruin of her own hopes, Catherine decided to devote her life to "doing good," and she saw no other way than by teaching. In 1822 she started a seminary for girls in Hartford, Connecticut, where the future author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a pupil and later an assistant teacher.

In 1832 poor health led to Catherine's resignation, and she went to Cincinnati where her father had just moved. Pressure was at once put upon her to start a school there. She had long been fired with the need for teachers in the West,<sup>38</sup> and poor health notwithstanding, she yielded. After two years she left the school to the management of her assistants, and partly for her health, and partly to make an educational survey, she began traveling over the western states. She

founded "The American Woman's Education Association," and took part in establishing three schools in the West under its auspices. Her books on domestic economy were best sellers. She wrote on religion, health, slavery, the Cherokee Indians, the training of children, and above all on education. Not bad for a semi-invalid.

A pamphlet Miss Beecher wrote in 1829, called *Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education*, summarized her experiments at Hartford. She began by pointing out that one had to serve an apprenticeship to become a shoemaker, but teaching — *to form the mind of man* — was deemed too simple an affair to require preparation; anyone, without training or aptitude, could become a teacher.

The best teacher, moreover, was faced with great difficulties. Few proper text-books existed, written so that children could understand them. Far too much memorizing was required, and not enough appeal to the eye, as with maps and globes. The situation was bad for boys, but far worse for girls. They were encouraged to "finish" their education without any basis of the fundamentals of knowledge; if a school made grammar, geography, and arithmetic obligatory, it was feared that pupils would be driven away.

Yet Miss Beecher's own experience had proved that this fear was unfounded. When she began teaching, it was generally felt that the excellence of a school depended largely on the number and unusualness of the branches taught, and one teacher might give instruction in ten to twenty different subjects. The Hartford Female Seminary had started out on this basis. There had been only one class room, and each class period was only fifteen minutes in length.

After three years Miss Beecher made a complete change. The school was incorporated, stock sold, and a suitable building erected, containing a large assembly and study hall and ten class and library rooms. Of the eight teachers, no one was to teach more than two subjects, and they were expected to keep themselves alert by reading and study. One teacher had no classes, but supervised the study hall and all matters

of neatness and propriety. There was much use of blackboards, maps and apparatus. The results convinced Miss Beecher that such a system brought great improvement, and that the public would support it.

In another pamphlet Miss Beecher painted a gloomy picture of the educational situation throughout the country: illiteracy was common, schools were too few in number and poor in quality — dirty, over-crowded, badly ventilated and with unsuitable teachers. To teach the children of the nation properly, 60,000 additional teachers were needed within twelve years. Not enough men would become teachers — other callings were more lucrative — and if the need were to be supplied it would have to be by women. All women, whether teachers or not, were urged to work for better schools. Why, she asked, should so much money be spent on a nine-year course to make young men good preachers, and nothing be done to make young women good teachers, — a calling in which they could be equally useful? By that time, about sixty per cent of the public school teachers in Massachusetts and New York were women, and Miss Beecher looked ahead to women's occupying a still larger place in public education, of boys as well as of girls. Time has fulfilled her anticipation.

Emma Willard and Catherine Beecher each made an enormous contribution to the education of women. Yet Miss Beecher was never able to raise the modest \$20,000 endowment which she regarded as a necessary minimum for a permanent school; the only one of the institutions she founded still in existence (now Milwaukee-Downer College) obtained an endowment after her death. Mrs. Willard received aid from the city of Troy, but it was barely enough to permit incorporation, and she and her successor continued to pay rent for the buildings. Not until 1873, when the trustees raised funds to complete their purchase, was "the perpetuity of the school secured."

The incorporation of a school was a step in advance, but

another step was needed. Mary Lyon took this further step, by obtaining an endowment for a seminary for girls.<sup>39</sup>

Left fatherless at the age of six, Mary Lyon had to earn every cent that went into her education. For seven years, begining in 1814 when she was seventeen years old, she taught the summer session at Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. By 1817 she had saved enough money to attend Ashfield Academy for the fall and winter terms, and for some years she alternated teaching and studying. Starting in 1824, she taught for four summers at Londonderry, New Hampshire, and at Ashfield or Buckland, Massachusetts, during the winter. Somewhere in these years a place was found for attending lectures at Amherst College, and also at Rensselaer School in Troy. In 1828, Miss Lyon went to Ipswich Seminary, where from 1830 to '34 she held the position of assistant principal.

By that time Miss Lyon had discovered from personal experience the limits of women's educational opportunities. She had become convinced that in order to have a school where girls could be educated at all comparably to men, an endowment was absolutely essential. Only an endowed school could have permanence, could choose its students on the basis of qualification, or could offer education on democratic terms to the young women of America. The cost of a single year in the better girls' schools of the time was often twice that of a man's entire college course.<sup>40</sup>

In those days it was not considered proper for a woman to speak in public, or to take public responsibility. Any new idea must be sponsored and conducted — nominally, at least, — by men. Few people, men or women, believed that Miss Lyon could succeed in her object; yet she found men who gave to this radical proposal not only their names but also constant, loyal, devoted service. The first meeting of the committee was held in September, 1834, and the charter empowering the trustees to hold property up to \$100,000 was signed February 11, 1836.

But that \$100,000 was still in the future, and \$25,000 must

be raised before building could be begun. Several men volunteered to solicit money, but the Panic of 1837 was already casting its shadow ahead. When funds came in too slowly, Miss Lyon defied convention and took up the work. She traveled alone, she addressed mixed meetings, and she talked to strange men. It was very unladylike, but when her friends remonstrated, she replied, "Better to violate taste than not have the work done."<sup>41</sup>

A harder year for the enterprise could not have been found, yet she raised \$27,000. This came from over eighteen hundred people in ninety-two towns. There were only two gifts as high as \$1000 — three of six cents each — and many between fifty cents and five dollars. It was a record of indomitable purpose on the one side, and of generous faith on the other. Over eighteen hundred people felt that the school to be started was *their* school.

Started it was, on November 8, 1837. For twelve crowded and happy years Miss Lyon served as principal at a salary of \$200 a year and board. She died suddenly, in harness, in 1849. The story of Mount Holyoke cannot be told here, nor its influence estimated. In the words of Mark Hopkins, it was the first institution in the United States<sup>42</sup>

where the buildings and grounds, the library and apparatus, are pledged as permanent contributions to the cause of female education. All other seminaries are sustained by individual enterprise, in some cases by a single person, in others by associations who receive an income from the investment of their money . . . It is an attempt to do for the daughters of the State what the State itself and beneficent individuals have from the first done for its sons.

Between 1776 and 1840, then, educational standards were improved, and still more, the opportunities open to women as teachers were widened. While the new emphasis on democracy was creating a demand for greater educational opportunity, the growth of industry and the opening of the West were luring men away from the schoolmaster's desk. These same changes were taking women's work out of the home, giving married women more time for other than physical

labor, and creating in the eastern states a class of unmarried women. In consequence, it was inevitable that more women should turn to teaching, and should find more positions open to them.

But the change had come faster in numbers than in quality. It was the particular objective of the pioneers just noted to make it possible for women to become *better* teachers.<sup>43</sup> In a little pamphlet called *General View of the Principles and Design of the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary* Miss Lyon wrote:

[It] will prepare ladies to be *educators* of children and youth, rather than to fit them to be mere teachers. . . . Such an education is needed by every lady, who takes the charge of a school, and sustains the responsibility of guiding the whole course, and of forming the whole character of those committed to her care. And when she has done with the business of teaching in a regular school, she will not give up her profession, but will still need the same well balanced education at the head of her own family, and in guiding her own household.

## CHAPTER II

### *“The Midwife and Doctress Business”*

Care of the sick has nearly always been considered part of women's proper sphere. In the early Republic as in colonial days,<sup>1</sup> women who had to support themselves or who liked activity found nursing a natural occupation, and some served as midwives and doctors. Information about them is regrettably meagre, but it is not wholly lacking.

The Revolutionary War brought a demand for hospital nurses, as is evidenced by a notice in the *Virginia Gazette* for July 26, 1776:

Wanted at the Continental Hospital at Williamsburg, some NURSES to attend the sick. Any such coming well recommended, will have good encouragement by applying to the Director of the Hospital.

Some of the nurses engaged were probably women. For example, the orderly book of Major William Heth, published in the *Virginia Historical Collections*, contained this direction:<sup>2</sup>

A proportionate Number of Women to the sick of each regim't to be sent to the Hospital at Mendham and Black River, to attend the Sick as Nurses.

One may assume that the standard of “good encouragement” promised in the advertisement just quoted was not high. A petition found in the Maryland archives paints a depressing picture:<sup>3</sup>

To the Honourable the Governor and Council  
The Humble Petition of Alice Redman one of the nurses  
at the hospital

Humbly Sheweth, that your petitioner has been a nurse

at the hospital for about a year she has been diligent and carefull in her office, which she your petitioner humbly beg for an augmentation to her pay as she is allowed two dollars a month she has at this present time sixteen men for to cook and take care off she your petitioner has since she has been a nurse had a great deal of trouble she is oblige to be up day and night with some of the patients and never has been allowed so much as a little Tea, or Coffee which she your petitioner hopes your Honours will take this petition into your consideration and your Petitioner in duty Bound will Ever Pray,

Alice Redman.

P.S. She your petitioner out of the two dollars pr month is oblige to buy brooms and the soap we wash with if your honours will please to relieve your petitioner will ever be bound to pray. A. Redman.

The sting is certainly in the tail. Whether "she your petitioner" received the desired relief does not appear.

With the establishment of civilian hospitals — a few in the eighteenth and many more in the nineteenth centuries — the demand for nurses increased. But not all hospital attendants were women. Before the days of the "trained nurse," men usually served in the men's wards, and women cared for women and children. The rule was not absolute, however; in *The History of Pennsylvania Hospital*, for example, mention is made of an "assistant female nurse of the men's ward" who caught yellow fever during the epidemic of 1798.<sup>4</sup>

Modern training for nurses is considered to have begun in 1873, but there were some traces earlier. Nutting and Dock in the standard *History of Nursing* claim that the first real training school for nurses on the American continent was instituted in the New York Hospital in 1798. The Philadelphia Dispensary is said to have had a training course "in active operation" after 1828, but records for the early years are missing. In March, 1837, a group of ladies organized "The Nurse Society of Philadelphia, for the purpose of providing, sustaining, and causing to be instructed as far as possible, pious and prudent women" for the care of the sick in their

homes, especially at childbirth. A lady visitor was assigned to each district, with as many nurses "of high character" as needful. Each nurse gave full time to one patient, and received \$2.50 a week from the society; she was supervised by the lady visitor and instructed by physicians in the dispensary. After serving satisfactorily on six cases the nurse received a certificate and became eligible for private calls.<sup>5</sup>

This course of training, if it may be so called, undoubtedly marked a considerable improvement. America as well as England had its Sairey Gamps. During the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 in Philadelphia, a fever hospital was set up at Bush Hill, of which the managers reported in despair:<sup>6</sup>

A profligate, abandoned set of nurses and attendants, (scarcely any of good character could at that time be procured) rioted on the provisions and comforts prepared for the sick, who (unless at the hours when the doctors attended) were left almost destitute of assistance.

The situation in Bellevue Hospital, New York, during the typhus epidemic in 1827, was similar. Prisoners were detailed for the service; but apparently this supply was not kept up, for during the epidemic of 1837 eight nurses left. The historian described them all as incompetent, dishonest, and drunken.<sup>7</sup>

Besides requiring nurses and attendants, hospitals created posts as matron, with a higher status. The names of the matrons of the Pennsylvania Hospital after 1751 have been preserved, but apparently the position was unsatisfactory, for the usual tenure of office was less than three years. Only one woman, Mary Mason, served over ten years, — from 1813 to 1826.<sup>8</sup>

At the Massachusetts General Hospital, opened in 1821, a cordial appreciation of the matrons and head nurses was always shown. At first the wife of the superintendent served as matron; later a head nurse was promoted to the post. On the death of the second matron, Mrs. Gurney, in 1829, the board passed a resolution of gratitude for her "kind and careful services."<sup>9</sup> When the superintendent, Dr. Gamaliel Brad-

ford, died in 1839, his widow continued for six months, and the historian paid warm tribute to the way she performed "the arduous and responsible duties of her post."<sup>10</sup>

The first woman chosen to a similar position purely on her own merits was Miss Mary Sawyer of Stirling, appointed to the new office of supervisor of the female department in 1832. In 1834 the board expressed its satisfaction by raising her salary — to \$200 a year! A few years later she married Mr. Tyler, superintendent of the men's side, but she continued her work.<sup>11</sup> In 1838, Miss Relief R. Barber was appointed female supervisor of McLean Hospital for the Insane, (a department of the Massachusetts General Hospital,) and the historian, commenting on the "exemplary manner" in which she performed her duties, added, "Miss Barber is indeed a second Mrs. Tyler."<sup>12</sup>

It was some years before hospitals established training schools for nurses, or enforced what would nowadays be considered suitable standards in choosing them; yet the subject received attention. In his report of January, 1836, the superintendent of McLean Hospital wrote of his assistants:<sup>13</sup>

We do not consider their service as servile; they are the companions of the unfortunate, engaged in the same employment as ourselves; they shall command our friendship and respect. — I do not ask for the institution or for myself more devoted fellow-laborers.

The phrase about not considering a nurse's work as servile is significant. A tribute to a nurse written by Dr. James Jackson, one of the founders of the Massachusetts General Hospital and a leading physician and citizen of Boston, throws into relief the equivocal standing of a nurse, and indeed of all women who worked, in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Miss Rebecca Taylor had just retired after serving the hospital for thirty-four years, most of the time as head nurse. Dr. Jackson described her as modest, never claiming any distinction, quiet, somewhat cold in her manner, yet tender to those in trouble and pain, with a force of character which enabled her to maintain discipline without apparent effort.

After some remarks about the new recognition of the importance of nursing for which Florence Nightingale was responsible, he continued:

There is not any comparison to be made between our good nurse and Miss Nightingale. The latter is a lady of education, and in a different rank of life. . . . My friend is one of much humbler pretensions. She has been a hired nurse. She sought an employment for her living. Having gained an appointment, she gave herself to her duties. . . . I have known many good nurses in private families. It is harder to perform faithfully and well the nursing in a hospital. I have been describing one of the most uniformly faithful, fulfilling all her duties in a faultless manner. . . . I cannot help hoping that it will be useful to hold up such an example for imitation. . . . I wish to point out how high are the duties of a nurse; and how justly they entitle one, who performs them skillfully and kindly, to the love and respect of mankind.

If the evidence about hospital nurses is fragmentary, there is even less information about those in private practice. They seldom advertised, and they made little impression on diarists and letter writers. Brief mention of a nurse is common enough. The diary of Margaret Holyoke of Salem, for example, often speaks of "Nurse Howard," but only to say "sat up with Mama; Nurse Howard with me," or "Nurse Howard went to Boston."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the diaries of Elizabeth Drinker of Philadelphia are filled with details of her own and her family's illnesses, yet they say little about nurses. Sally Lampl, who cared for a married daughter, was no favorite with Mrs. Drinker, who thought that she "has a mind to be consequential." Sally Stansbury and her sister Mollie Morris were called good nurses. Hannah Yerkes must have been esteemed, for she was employed whenever possible. Although Mrs. Drinker throws a flood of light on medical treatment a century and a half ago, this is all that she had to say about nurses.<sup>16</sup>

The diary of Reverend William Bentley of Salem gives a glimpse of a veteran nurse, Mrs. Lydia (Chever) Beckford. She was born in 1703 and died in 1804, at the ripe age of

one hundred years and three months. On hearing of her death, Bentley wrote:<sup>17</sup>

I was personally acquainted with her. She had a strong constitution, & general health, and may be classed among those, who by free air and full exercise and plain food not only prolonged life, but had rendered it, according to their own wishes, happy. Her posterity had been very numerous and are comfortably situated in life. . . . She had a cheerfulness and vigor, and was esteemed quite the good nurse. . . . She was a woman of full size, muscular, not fat, but fleshy, strong, patient of labor, equal yet persevering, not aspiring, yet active and contented.

Apparently she did not take up nursing until after her third widowhood, when she was sixty-nine years old. She cannot have done so from financial necessity, for beside the statement that her children were in comfortable circumstances, Bentley noted: "The family of Chever still continue to hold a great part of the antient patrimony."

Little information has come to hand about the pay which private nurses received. An old account book of the John Street Methodist Church in New York contains this entry:<sup>18</sup>

1788, June 4. To cash pd. Ann Wheeler for nursing Brother Hickson, six weeks at two dollars per week, £4 16 0

Ann Wheeler's charge was moderate compared with that mentioned a few years later by the British actor John Bernard:<sup>19</sup>

Fennel (the actor) was once taken ill at Baltimore, and on sending for a nurse inquired her terms. "Me ask oo two dollars a day, Massa Fennel." "Two dollars!" he exclaimed. "That's double the ordinary charge." "Iss why, 'cause oo get well so berry soon." "What do you mean?" inquired the tragedian. "I go to gallery of a play sometimes, and I see oo, massa, always berry bad at night, and quite well in a morning, so I'm tinking I shall neber get de five dollars for lay oo out." Fennel was so cheered by the impression that he got well on the strength of it, and said he never paid an extortion so willingly.

An extortion it certainly was; in fact one dollar a day was extremely high pay for the times, and it is probable that Ann

Wheeler's two dollars a week was more typical.

In many societies, women have been physicians as well as nurses, and obstetrics in particular was often regarded as their province. In early colonial days they had a virtual monopoly of it; in fact, a man in Wells, Maine, was fined fifty shillings in 1675, for "presuming to act the part of a midwife."<sup>20</sup> Men accoucheurs were practically unknown in this country until about 1760, and it was many years before they supplanted midwives.<sup>21</sup>

Men are said to have entered the field of obstetrics in Boston earlier than elsewhere,<sup>22</sup> yet a well known midwife practised there from 1818 to 1845. Mrs. Janet Alexander had come from Edinburgh at the invitation of the leading physicians of Boston, and she soon acquired a high reputation. When strong inducements were offered her to move to New York, a group of Boston women raised \$1200 to keep her with them. She died in 1845, "universally mourned for her great worth and usefulness." It is stated in the *Memorial History of Boston*, that she was probably the last midwife who attended "the higher classes in Boston, although many still find employment among families of moderate means."<sup>23</sup>

Little is known about most midwives. As with nurses, references to them are frequent, but they are brief and casual. Washington's diary for November 30, 1799, carried this laconic entry: "Mrs. Summers, midwife for Mrs. Lewis, came here abt. 3 o'clock."<sup>24</sup> Dr. Bentley mentioned that the minister of Pigeon Cove, Massachusetts, had had a house left to him "by an antiquated Irish midwife, who died in the town."<sup>25</sup> The instructions of the overseer of Telfair Plantation, in Jefferson County, Georgia, written apparently soon after 1800, stated that: "Elsey is the doctress of the plantation," but that she was to give way to a physician when she found a case beyond her skill, — she apparently to be the judge — and that she might serve as midwife "to black and white in the neighborhood who send for her."<sup>26</sup> Samuel Gregory, of whom more anon, stated that slave women were often successful midwives, caring for the women of both

races. He told of a slave in Arkansas who rode on call from one plantation to another, and made quite an income for her master.<sup>27</sup>

A few midwives advertised. Thus Mrs. Malcolm announced in the *Independent Journal* (New York) for September 30, 1785, that<sup>28</sup>

she has lately arrived from Edinburgh, where she studied and practised Midwifery for a considerable number of years, and had the honour of attending several Ladies of the first rank in that City. She has recommendations from most of the principal professors of that art in Scotland, with a Diploma from the late Dr. Thomas Young, Professor of Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh. Any Ladies chusing to employ her, will be immediately waited upon by sending to her lodgings, at Mr. Vanantwerp's, No. 61, Maiden Lane, and they may depend upon the utmost care and attention being paid them in the way of her business.

Edinburgh was a leading center of medical instruction at the time. Mrs. Alexander, it will be remembered, came from there, and so also did two women who practised midwifery successfully in Charleston. Mrs. Brown, in announcing her arrival in 1791, claimed to have a diploma from the University of Edinburgh, and a "particular recommendation from Dr. Hamilton." In 1796 Mrs. Monroe made an almost identical statement, adding that she had studied for six years.<sup>29</sup>

Town histories often mention midwives who attained great age, — they seem to have been a long-lived race — or who were believed to hold a record for the number of children ushered into the world. In *The Nantucket Scrap Basket*, for example, Rachel Bunker is mentioned; she died in 1796 at the age of eighty, she left twelve children, one hundred and thirteen grandchildren, and ninety-eight greatgrandchildren, and during thirty-three years of active work she had assisted at the births of 2994 children, among whom were thirty-one pairs of twins.<sup>30</sup> A striking record certainly; but except for the twins, it is rivaled if not duplicated in many town histories.

The town of Southold, Long Island, had a long record of

outstanding midwives, although no one of them had as great a number of cases to her credit as Rachel Bunker. Mrs. Caroline Dall wrote in 1867:<sup>31</sup>

From 1740 to the present time — more than a hundred years — the town has had a trustworthy female physician. The first of these, Elizabeth King, who practised from 1740 until her death in 1780, attended at the birth of more than a thousand children. During this time, from 1760 to 1775 . . . a Mrs. Peck was also known in the town as an excellent midwife. The direct successor of Mrs. King was, however, a Mrs. Lucretia Lester, who practised from 1745 to 1779. [sic] Of her my authority says, "She was justly respected as nurse and doctress to the pains and infirmities incident to her fellow mortals, especially to her own sex," a remark which shows that she attended both. "She was during thirty years, conspicuous as an angel of mercy; a woman whose price was above rubies. It is said that she attended at the birth of 1300 children, and of that number, lost but two."

A Mrs. Susannah Brown practised from 1800 to 1840, and attended at the birth of 1400 children. Mrs. Dall said that Mrs. King had probably studied abroad, and had taught Mrs. Lester, and possibly Mrs. Peck.

Beside these slightly trained midwives, there was another type, sometimes male and sometimes female. The following advertisement, inserted by Judith Corey in the *New England Palladium* for March 4, 1808, is typical. She informed the Boston public that

she follows the Midwife and Doctress business; that she cures Burns, Salt Rheum, Canker, Scald-head, Fever Sores, Rheumatism, & the Piles. Apply No. 47, *Back street* — where persons may be accomodated with Board.

Judith was the kind of "midwife and doctress" upon whom critics fixed their attention in decrying women's taking any share in the higher branches of the healing arts. Actually, traces have been found of quite as many men as women quacks; there probably was no sex difference.

In colonial days, several women advertised their readiness to cure skin diseases and to beautify the ugly.<sup>32</sup> Either their numbers fell off in the national period, or they found no

need to advertise. Practically the only beauty specialists who made their appearance in the newspapers between 1776 and 1840 were a few hairdressers. There was Mrs. Mercier, for example, who advertised in the Philadelphia papers for 1791, as "lately from Paris, a pupil of the Queen's Hair Dresser." The date suggests that she was a recent refugee. Evidently she was not confident of being able to make a living by dressing hair, in spite of the Queen, for she announced her readiness also to make hats and bonnets.<sup>33</sup> However, a hairdresser of Boston, Harriet Ryan, earned not only a livelihood, but also a reputation as a citizen. She and Ann Bent, merchant, were named in the *Memorial History of Boston* as outstanding examples of highly respected business women, and a footnote states that Miss Ryan had founded a home for incurable patients. Mrs. Dall referred to her as "our saintly Harriet Ryan."<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Bentley has preserved the name of a different sort of hairdresser. When starting on a journey with a friend in 1799, he wrote:

We stopped in the Harbor to be shaved by a woman named Becky, who in due form exercises all the functions of a *barber*. She has her shop decorated with all the pictures which belong to such places of resort, from the meanest Black print to the best engraving, with all the songs which are in the taste of the varied multitude of her customers. It was a solitary example of a woman in this employment. She shaves well, but has few attractions of her sex.

A journey in 1802 began the same way: "We went first to Becky, who still holds her *barber's* shop, and all its decorations." And in 1816, "I visited my old female *Barber*, the only one in town. She inherits her station. She remembered me thirty years ago."<sup>35</sup>

The last entry suggests that she had learned her art, (and perhaps inherited the decorations which so intrigued Dr. Bentley), from her father. Several women have been found who obtained instruction in higher professional pursuits from a relative. One such was Jane Tytler, pharmacist, who came

to Salem from Scotland with her husband James, a chemist of considerable reputation. After his death in 1804, Jane advertised that she was equipped to prepare drugs for the medical profession. Evidently the occupation was not lucrative, for she died in the almshouse twenty years later, at the age of eighty-four. Bentley, who noted her death, called her a very worthy woman.<sup>36</sup>

Almenia Kittredge of Somesville, Maine, seems to have prescribed as well as prepared medicines. She assisted her father, Dr. Kendall Kittredge, who used to go — by boat, horseback, or afoot — all over Mount Desert Island. After his death, she used his formulas for the benefit of her own family and her neighbors.<sup>37</sup>

A dashing lady physician appears briefly in the biography of John Adams' daughter and son-in-law, *Colonel William Smith and Lady*. The author states that Colonel Smith's sister Charity, afterward Mrs. Shaw, "practised — and we trust studied — medicine, scandalizing the neighbors by driving about in a gig with a black boy."<sup>38</sup>

Such untrained or casually trained doctors, both men and women, were common in colonial society, and for many years longer on the frontier and in remote districts. Such a one was Mrs. Mary Newport, later Mrs. Butler. Her daughter Anne Royall, the journalist and author who will be met again in these pages, wrote that her mother acted as physician to the frontier communities in which she lived — in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, and finally Indiana. In 1831, Mrs. Royall set out to pay her a visit, at her home in Vermilion County, Indiana. When Anne arrived unheralded, her mother was in a neighbor's house caring for a sick child. She was seventy-seven years old and had shaking palsy, but her daughter, who had not seen her for sixteen years, thought her mental faculties stronger than ever:

She is never sick, but has devoted so much of her time to the afflicted, that her knowledge of medicine is said to be consulted before any physician wherever she is known. I had heard this, but treated it as a farce. But after seeing her I

would believe anything. She was always reckoned sensible, but she is far beyond that now.

Mrs. Royall added that she was once "the handsomest of her day," although undersized, but by 1831 she was considerably bent and browned.<sup>39</sup>

As long as no professional preparation was available, women like these appear to have been as acceptable and almost as numerous as male doctors. As standards became higher, however, women were forced out: the door leading to medical education was barred with a sign "Men Only Admitted." That lettering is scarcely obliterated yet, but the door was pushed ajar when Elizabeth Blackwell was admitted to the Geneva (New York) Medical School in 1848.<sup>40</sup>

Harriet K. Hunt of Boston was a predecessor of Elizabeth Blackwell, who finding the front door bolted, had crept in by a side entrance. Her autobiography, *Glances and Glimpses*, published in 1856, throws light on her struggles for a medical education and on the standards of health and hygiene of the time.

Miss Hunt, born in 1805, and her younger sister Sarah had opened a small private school in Boston to support themselves and their mother, but Sarah's prolonged illness drew their attention painfully to the subject of medicine. The leading doctors of Boston held out little hope of her recovery, but, wrote Harriet:

A physician, Mrs. Mott, who with her husband had come to Boston [from England] to establish themselves in practise, after hearing me patiently, said she thought my sister could be cured. We were open to all sorts of opposition for even thinking of such a thing as employing a "quack!" But we were weary and tired out with the "regulars"; and it did not occur to us that to die under regular practise and with medical etiquette was better than any other way.

Harriet soon went to the Motts as a secretary, and became absorbed in the medical side of her work; and she and her sister, now fully recovered, studied everything that was open to them. In 1835, they began to practise, declining cases

which they felt to be beyond their skill. They were interested in hygiene, and laid a stress on bathing which was unusual at the time. In her autobiography Miss Hunt referred to the fears of bathing which were then common, and declared that they were founded on ignorance. It seems strange now to read her opinion that many persons injured themselves by intemperance in bathing as well as by abstinence.

At first the Hunt sisters did not undertake midwifery nor did they visit patients in their homes, "for we knew if we did, doctors would say, as we were women, that we were insinuating ourselves into families, and weakening confidence in the faculty." They specialized in chronic cases; confirmed invalids, of whom there were many, often found the effort to go to the doctor's office a benefit in itself, Miss Hunt believed. Soon Sarah turned her attention to the care of children, but she married after a few years, and although she did not give up her practise at once, the cares of her family gradually reduced it. Harriet meanwhile found particular interest and success in dealing with mental diseases. She developed a practise in outlying towns such as Lynn, where she went once a week by stagecoach.<sup>41</sup>

In 1847 Miss Hunt applied for permission to attend lectures on anatomy at Harvard Medical School, but was refused. A second application in 1850 promised to fare better; the faculty and the overseers consented, but the students protested so violently that the permission was withdrawn.<sup>42</sup>

Miss Hunt continued to practise until her death in 1875. In later years she became well known as a reformer, active against the use of alcohol and tobacco, and against slavery. Her major interest, however, was the position of women, and she won a wide reputation as an ardent worker for their emancipation.<sup>43</sup>

While Elizabeth Blackwell and Harriet Hunt were struggling to aid American women, the plight of women in mission lands, particularly India, became an effective argument for women's study of medicine. A male physician was not allowed to attend a zenana woman unless she were desperately ill, and

then only under difficulties; the examination might be limited to taking her pulse through a curtain.<sup>44</sup>

The situation in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century was not quite so bad but it was similar. Never in the western world, apparently, was "female modesty" more powerful. Our ancestors considered the body as highly improper, particularly the female body. George Combe, the Scot who travelled widely in the United States from 1838 to '40, quoted a clergyman as saying that the word leg must never be mentioned in mixed society, and that a lady who was suffering pain in any part of the trunk would always locate it in the breast!<sup>45</sup>

Female modesty, indeed, presented a serious barrier to the advancement of medical science. That evil fairy influenced every sphere of life, but none with more malign power than that of health. The ill health of American women was notorious. Dr. Harvey Lindsey of Washington, D. C., summed up the case in an article in the *Southern Literary Messenger*.<sup>46</sup> Even making due allowance for "those diseases peculiar to their situation and duties in society," he said that American women were less robust than American men. He described "the slender and delicate and fragile form, . . . the pale, sallow, and waxen complexion," common in the United States; European and English women had better complexions and more vigor, could endure greater fatigue and exposure, and perform much harder labor. He appealed to the physicians of America to study the matter and search for a remedy.

Combe commented on the situation at length. He believed that bad habits rather than the climate were responsible. American women did not walk enough, they lived in ill-ventilated rooms, they did not have enough amusement and variety of occupation, and their diet was unhygienic: "Pies, pastry, and animal foods are consumed in quantities too abundant for a sedentary life, and baths and ablutions are too rarely used." — An unattractive picture of our great-grandmothers, but its truth is abundantly corroborated.

Harriet Martineau had much to say on the same theme,<sup>47</sup>

and Fanny Kemble, the celebrated actress, underscored it. She married an American and lived for several years in Branchtown, Pennsylvania. In 1835 she wrote a friend:<sup>48</sup>

Many women here when they become mothers, seem to lose looks, health, and strength, and are mere wrecks. . . . Of course, this result is attributable to many various causes, and admits of plenty of individual exceptions, but I believe that tight lacing, want of exercise, and a perpetual inhaling of overheated atmosphere to be among the former . . . They pinch their pretty little feet cruelly, and of course cannot walk. . . . The climate, which is the general cause assigned for the ill health of American women, seems to me to receive more than its due share of the blame. [She understood that squaws were extremely vigorous.] . . . I think in matters of diet, dress, exercise, regularity in eating, and due ventilation of their houses, the Americans have little or no regard for the laws of health.

Similar testimony could be cited in abundance. The situation was bad enough as it affected one half of the population. Still worse, women were the mothers and the teachers of the young, and their ill-health and ignorance of hygiene afflicted the coming generation. Thoughtful people were distressed by the realization and sought a remedy. Mary Lyon had said of women's education, "Better to violate taste than not to have the work done."<sup>49</sup> Here and there a few men and women were beginning to murmur: "Better to outrage female delicacy than to let women remain in such ill-health and ignorance."

An effort to dispel the ignorance without too great violence to the delicacy was made through the study of physiology. Several progressive teachers included courses in physiology for their girls. In April, 1839, Combe noted in New York:

I had the pleasure of meeting a lady well known in this and neighboring states for her success in female education. She mentioned that Dr. A. Combe's *Physiology applied to Health and Education* and my work on *The Constitution of Man* had been regularly taught by her to her pupils for some years; and that with a few explanations, they readily understood

them, and take a great interest in them. The young ladies range from nine to fifteen years of age.

Emma Willard regarded physiology as the most important study for girls, and established it at Troy Female Seminary. When some lady visitors were so shocked to see drawings of the heart, arteries, and veins, that they fled in dismay, she had paper pasted over the pictures; but she continued the instruction.<sup>50</sup>

Several women gave lectures to women on physiology, and they found eager auditors. One of the best known of these was Mrs. Mary Gove, later Mrs. Nichols. Harriet Hunt, who was a friend of hers, wrote that she was the more readily accepted as a lecturer because of her Quaker garb, for the public had become somewhat accustomed to Quaker women as speakers.<sup>51</sup> In spite of this advantage, Mrs. Gove met plenty of opposition. In May, 1839, Combe described an instance:<sup>52</sup>

[Mrs. Gove] was well received in Boston, and has recently lectured in New York. She is a lady of unquestioned character, and her lectures are attended by most respectable persons of her own sex in the city. No gentlemen are admitted. The advantages of the instruction are self-evident, and every real friend to human welfare must wish her success; Bennett's *Morning Herald*, however, to its own deep disgrace, has published what pretends to be reports of her lecture, pandering to the grovelling feelings of the men and affronting the delicacy of the ladies — an effectual way, in this country, to stifle any new attempt at improvement. I have inquired into the character of the lectures, of ladies who heard them, and they declare Bennett's report to be scandalous caricatures, misrepresentations, and inventions.

Again in December he noted:

This day C— attended one of Mrs. Gove's lectures to ladies. The subject was the effects of tight lacing and bad ventilation. The lecture was good and the attendance about 300, all ladies.

“C—” was his wife Cecilia, daughter of the famous Mrs. Siddons.

Miss Hunt herself gave lectures on physiology, and in 1843

she helped found the Charlestown Ladies' Physiological Society. She was sometimes the speaker, or sometimes Horace Mann, or others. During the lecture, the women sewed or knitted for poor children; and if no lecturer was available, someone read from a book on physiology. In 1849 Miss Hunt started a course of lectures in Boston, especially for working women.<sup>53</sup>

Long before this time, proposals had been made to give medical instruction to suitable women, so that they might minister to their own sex with less outrage to modesty than the employment of a male physician involved. This plan had been in operation in obstetrical care; whatever the original causes for employing midwives, the practise was defended and prolonged on grounds of modesty.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, the very female delicacy which made women physicians so desirable, appeared as an insuperable barrier to their being trained. The rajahs in India did not care what happened to the women from the West who treated their wives; but chivalrous American men could not contemplate subjecting any woman to the ordeal of a medical education. A Boston physician of 1828 put the case forcefully:<sup>55</sup>

I do not intend to imply any intellectual inferiority or incompetence in the sex. My objections are founded rather upon the nature of their moral qualities than upon the powers of their minds, and upon those very qualities, which render them, in their appropriate sphere, the pride, the ornament, and the blessing of mankind. . . . It is obvious that we cannot instruct women as we do men in the science of medicine; we cannot carry them into the dissecting room and the hospital; . . . and I venture to say, that a female could scarce pass through the course of education, requisite to prepare her as she ought to be prepared, for the practise of midwifery, without destroying those moral qualities of character, which are essential to the office.

It was fortunate that the moral qualities of men were harder.

A New York physician was even more emphatic. Dr. Augustus K. Gardner wrote in his *History of the Art of Midwifery*, (1852)<sup>56</sup>

At the present time there is a proposition mooted, springing from the same high source which advocates women's rights, the Bloomer costume, and other nonsensical theories . . . to give again the portion of the healing art of which I am treating, if not the whole domain of medicine, to the females. . . . I do not intend to deny . . . women's superiority to men in gentleness, patience, and sympathy, . . . but it is precisely upon that ground that I deny the deduction from these admitted facts. Woman has too much kindness of heart, sympathy, and sensibility, to properly fill this important post [of midwife.] Granted that all women do not possess such acute perceptions, she is then denaturalized; she is not a woman in all that makes a woman lovable and valuable. I have known many professional midwives, . . . and their lineaments all betray, not the sensitive heart alive to human woes, throbbing in sympathy, but cold, hard, calculating, mercenary. Contact with the world; the cares and trials of a life devoted not to science, but to the acquisition of money, . . . it is this that transforms the nature, thus rendering repulsive what is by birth so amiable and lovely.

But this is not all; woman wants . . . not quickness of perception nor brilliance of intellect — I am willing to allow her equal to men in these characteristics, — but she lacks strength of mind, correct judgment, coolness in difficulty, courage in danger.

And so on, at length. Dr. Gardner considered that the law which required a midwife to summon a physician in a dangerous case proved his contentions, and he quoted various doctors who agreed with him at all points.

An elaborate answer to such arguments had been published in 1850 by Samuel Gregory of Boston, who had been studying the subject for a number of years. Knowing how painful women found it to be attended by male physicians, he had thought it odd that midwifery should be "exclusively in the hands of men." He came to the conclusion that this practise was limited to the United States and was of recent growth there. He cited a number of distinguished continental midwives, and recounted improvements in technique which some of them had developed. His argument that women were perfectly capable of handling most cases need not be detailed

here, but his reply to two frequently heard objections is worth citing. As for the contention that *midwives* could not answer calls in severe weather, he pointed out that *nurses* did so: why not, then, *midwives*? As for the more important charge, that women lacked coolness and judgement in an emergency, he maintained that they lacked confidence because they realized the inadequacy of their training. The woman whose training and experience had taught her what ought to be done, would be as prompt and cool as a man, he believed, in doing it.<sup>57</sup>

Gregory cited a number of cases within his knowledge in which the availability of a trained woman might have preserved life or health. Sometimes the patient did not call the physician until too late; and sometimes the presence of a man was so distressing to the patient as to tip the balance against recovery. The modern reader may regard these statements as fanciful; but anyone who realizes the grip in which current ideals of modesty held most women of the time, will not find it difficult to accept Gregory's conclusions.

Dr. Gardner's condemnation of women had been challenged in practise as well as in theory, and several doctors had already made an effort to provide midwives with some training. Dr. Shippen of Philadelphia had a course for them as early as 1765. Dr. Valentine Seaman of New York (who is said to have started the first training school for nurses) believed that midwives were indispensable and that they ought to be properly instructed; as a step in this direction he wrote the alliteratively named text-book, *The Midwife's Monitor and Mother's Mirror*.<sup>58</sup>

Gregory also put his beliefs into practise. In 1848 he started the "Boston Female Medical School," later called the "New England Female Medical College." Founded in the hope of ultimately giving full medical education to women, it began with a modest twelve-week course to train midwives. It never attained high professional standing, but it deserves remembrance as the first school in the world to offer medical training expressly for women. Gregory's writings brought support,

both moral and financial. In 1874, (two years after his death) the school was merged with the Boston University School of Medicine, which thereafter admitted women on an equality with men.<sup>59</sup>

The ill health of American women, whether regarded as an objective fact or as a subjective idea, was inextricably bound up with their opportunities in the healing arts. It affected opportunities in other lines also, and was a stock argument against their entering any new trade or profession. No adequate explanation of this ill health can be given on the basis of a single study; comparative studies are needed of the health of American men at the same time, and of women at other times and places. The physical causes suggested by foreign observers — too little exercise, fresh air, and bathing, and too much heavy food — could account for a great deal.

It seems probable, however, that social and psychological factors deserve at least as much attention as purely physical ones. This point of view is implicit in *The Study of Man*, (1936), by Ralph Linton:<sup>60</sup>

Even the psychological characteristics ascribed to men and women in different societies vary so much that they can have little physiological basis. Our own idea of women as ministering angels contrasts sharply with the ingenuity of women as torturers among the Iroquois, and the sadistic delight they took in the process. Even the last two generations have seen a sharp change in the psychological patterns for women in our own society. The delicate fainting lady of the middle eighteen-hundreds is as extinct as the dodo.

The present study breaks off at what may seem an unfortunate moment, for the fainting lady was in her prime in the 1840s and '50s. A candid inquirer of that day must have admitted that women held a distinctly lower position in the healing arts then than they had in 1776. The private nurse stood about the same, while hospitals, it is true, had increased the opportunities for nursing, and offered a few positions of prestige as head nurses and matrons. From the vantage point of today, indeed, one can trace faintly the beginning of train-

ing and of professional standards. Yet it is probable that in contemporary regard the position of the nurse was lower than in colonial days, — less distinguishable from that of a servant.

The status of the woman doctor and midwife, on the other hand, had suffered severely. It was a far cry from the days of Lysbert Dircken, first midwife in New Amsterdam, who was presented with a house built at public expense,<sup>61</sup> to the time when a leading New York physician characterized the sisterhood as "cold, hard, calculating, mercenary, repulsive." Throughout the colonial period, no group of women occupied positions of greater dignity than midwives. It is probable that plenty of women pursued their calling usefully and made a decent living during the nineteenth century; but Janet Alexander stands almost alone in having received public evidences of appreciation and respect. The midwife had fallen upon evil days, and the woman doctor was in no better case. The observer of 1840 or '50, if interested in the position of women, might well have been disheartened.

Yet, even as Dr. Gardner *et al* demonstrated the impossibility of the thing, Elizabeth Blackwell was receiving her medical degree. True, the conservatives hastily threw up new barricades, and the road was still narrow and difficult.<sup>62</sup> But it now led straight ahead: by 1850 the corner had been turned.

## CHAPTER III

### *Despite Saint Paul*

Women in America have always contributed their full share to church work, but few at any time have preached or have held important office in the organized churches. This is not peculiar to America; the Christian Church everywhere, whatever its form, has kept rather close to the Pauline doctrine of male domination.<sup>1</sup> When the Protestant churches permitted the clergy to marry, they opened a new field to women's work — a field which has been nobly cultivated. But ministers' wives work within such carefully defined bounds, with the conditions and rewards of their labor so largely dependent on their husbands' rather than on their own attainments, that they do not form an exception to the general statement.

Everywhere, in fact, women have given the church loyal and devoted service, which has been accepted and sometimes appreciated. After their deaths, some women have even been canonized. But their activities have been strictly limited. Sisters of charity, deaconesses, mothers in Israel, saints even, — yes. But priests, parsons, or high officers of diocese, presbytery, or assembly, — no.

There was a moment in the seventeenth century when it looked as if Anne Hutchinson might start a new tradition in this country, but her fate did not encourage other women to meddle in church affairs. Few, during colonial days or in the early Republic, attempted to overstep the line drawn for them.

The word *organized* in the first sentence of this chapter should be noted, however. In general, the stronger the ec-

clesiastical tradition and more compact the organization, the less place for women. Loosely organized fellowships sometimes accepted them, and new sects and revivalistic movements often allowed women the same opportunities as men.

Jemima Wilkinson, who called herself the "Universal Friend," is a striking instance; she was the most conspicuous woman preacher of her time.<sup>2</sup> Born in Cumberland, Rhode Island, in 1751, she was described as a fine blooming girl, sprightly in manner and comely in person; but from early childhood she showed great skill in avoiding her share of the household tasks. She was sent home from the tailoring shop where she had been apprenticed because she was idle and vain, and her family found her a sore trial. While in her 'teens she developed great interest in religion, and in the middle of a night in October, 1775, she startled her sisters by announcing that she had just risen from the dead. Later she modified this statement by saying that Jemima Wilkinson was dead and her soul in Heaven, but her body was now inhabited by Christ, who would preach on earth for a thousand years.

The preaching began promptly and won believers. Societies were started in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and after a few years elaborate plans were made for setting up headquarters in Pennsylvania. But when the initial interest in Jemima waned there, she decided to build her "New Jerusalem" on the frontier of New York State. Further delays occurred. Money did not come in as fast as expected. A quarrel in the Rhode Island branch, in which she was accused of having stolen the treasury, disrupted that group. But finally the faithful were gathered together for the trek west.

In 1789 her party of about one hundred pitched its tents near Seneca Lake. They held some 1400 acres, most of it vested in Jemima, and everyone gave her labor. At one time the group was said to number a hundred and fifty but it gradually dwindled. An attempt to convert the neighboring Indians met with no success; the interpreter remarked that

if she were Jesus Christ, as she claimed, she could understand their language without his aid.

Many diaries and books of travel speak of Jemima. In her heyday she was a leading sensation, and she always attracted attention. Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia mentioned her several times in his diary — first on August 15, 1784:

Returning from church, I observed people crowded about the Free Quakers' meeting-house, and was told they were waiting to see the wonderful Jemima Wilkinson, who had preached. I remained until she came out to get in her chair. She had on a white hat but no cap, and a white linen garment that covered her feet.

A few days later he heard her preach, and again in 1788. Both times he commented on her appearance but said nothing about the sermon.<sup>3</sup>

The Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt, who saw her ten or twelve years later, described her in detail. She wore, he noted, what he called a morning gown with a man's waist-coat, a stock, and a white cravat. Her glossy black hair was cut and carefully combed in three rows of ringlets. He called her well made and florid, with fine teeth and beautiful eyes. He thought her manner studied and pedantic, and the sermon, he said, was "an eternal repetition of the same topics — death, sin, and repentance." He commented on the fact that in spite of a vow of poverty and the extreme humility of her talk, everything about her was comfortable, even fine.<sup>4</sup>

A traveler in New York in 1811 received a similar impression. He described a coach which was being made for her, with a star on each side panel and on the rear a cross surmounted by a star, with the letters U. F. (Universal Friend.) He concluded his description:

I saw this woman many years since; she was then young and handsome, she is neither now. . . . Her tribe amounts to about 70 old men, old women, and young children, and except she divides the property, the greatest share of which she has contrived to possess herself, will not increase.

By the time of her death in 1819, the community had shrunk to forty, and they soon scattered.<sup>5</sup>

Ann Lee, the founder of Shakerism in America, made claims somewhat similar to those of Jemima Wilkinson, and she was more successful in establishing a sect.<sup>6</sup> She started her career in England, but came to America in 1774, at the age of thirty-eight, accompanied by a group of believers. They purchased land and started a community at Watervliet, New York. They seem to have made little stir for a few years, but successful revivals began in 1780. "Mother Ann," as she was called, died in 1784. She had claimed to be the female manifestation of divinity, and founder of the second Christian church, as Jesus was the male manifestation and first Founder. The sect, which is of interest to sociologists as an example of communal living, has always treated men and women alike. Lucy Wright, born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1760, was the head from 1796 to 1821. During these years societies were established in Ohio and Kentucky, and the older groups in the East grew in numbers. Since Shakerism enforces celibacy, it is dependent on conversions from the outside world for its continued existence. In 1874 it had fifty-eight communities with a total membership of 2,415, but since that time its numbers have declined.

Not all the seers and prophets attempted to start new sects; Harriet Livermore, the "not unfear'd, half-welcome guest" of Whittier's *Snowbound*, preached a gospel of her own, but kept more or less within the established denominations. As the granddaughter of a senator from New Hampshire, she enjoyed the best social and educational advantages of the time, and she was considered a handsome and popular young woman. In 1823, when thirty-five years old, she received what she took to be a direct message from God, and decided that in spite of her sex it was her duty to preach. Calling herself "the Pilgrim Stranger," she journeyed all over the country. She was sometimes turned away, either because of her sex or of her peculiar doctrines, but she found churches of a wide variety of denominations willing to hear her. She spoke with fervor and eloquence, it is said, and interrupted her preaching to sing hymns in a beautiful voice.

Miss Livermore, like many people of the time, expected the immediate second coming of Christ, and asserted that He would appear in Jerusalem. She claimed to have proof that the American Indians were descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes; and in 1832 she made an arduous journey to what was then the Far West, hoping to convert the Indians and arrange for them to go to Jerusalem to welcome the Lord. The commissioners for Indian Affairs were not impressed, however, and would not let her remain. Thereupon she set out for Jerusalem by herself. She had little money, and the journey was a difficult undertaking for anyone. But she persevered and made in all four visits to the Holy Land. She outlived all her relatives, and lost the money which they had left for her care. She died in 1868, at the age of eighty, in an almshouse in Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup>

A number of women gained local celebrity as revivalists, but little information is available about them. John Melish, the British traveller who visited the United States in 1807-08, described a Methodist meeting held near Augusta, Georgia:<sup>8</sup>

We were informed that a little before we reached this place, a poor girl was so affected, that she fell down in a fit; and that a black female preacher, of the name of Dorothy Ripley, frequently attended, and had the art of playing upon the passions so effectively, that she would sometimes trip a half dozen hearers.

Michael Chevalier, the French visitor who published his *Letters from North America* in 1839, also made an unsympathetic reference to camp-meetings:<sup>9</sup>

Women . . . take a not less active part in them than the most rousing preachers. . . . The camp meeting with the raving Pythonissas have made the fortune of the Methodists, and attracted to this church in America a more numerous body of adherents than is numbered by any of the English sects in Europe.

An account from a different angle appears in *Recollections of Frontier Life*, by Mrs. Elizabeth A. Roe. In her description of Island Grove, Morgan County, Illinois, around 1830, she wrote:<sup>10</sup>

We had a pleasant female prayer meeting which was a source of much good and there were many souls converted. It was conducted by dear old Mother Rogers, who was our leader. She exhorted powerfully, and oh! what a near approach she would make to the Lord in prayer. It did seem as though the Lord denied her nothing she asked for.

A little further on Mrs. Roe noted: "Mother Rogers was very useful at the Athens revival."

Enthusiasm, using the word in its invidious eighteenth century meaning, made its appearance in most denominations. A curious instance is described by Richardson Wright in *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America*:<sup>11</sup>

New York City in 1821 saw the appearance of a female of the Presbyterian persuasion who became gloomy and ascetic over what she considered to be the immodesty of women's dress. Together with a coterie of satellites, she instituted a crusade which worked as follows: Under various pretenses, committees of two would make their way into a private house, kneel down, pray for the conversion of the women of that household and start to harangue them on the extravagance of their clothes. . . . For two years or more respectable people never knew when they would find these praying women in their front hall.

The Society of Friends has always given women a fuller share in religious matters than any other recognized church body. Women have been elders and have held other offices, while women preachers have been fairly numerous at all periods, and several have won outstanding recognition.

Information about early Quaker preachers is abundant and readily accessible, for many diaries and memoirs of Friends have been printed. The diaries are often outspoken. For example, Caleb Cresson of Philadelphia<sup>12</sup> chronicled a meeting held "3d day, 11th," 1791, at which

our European women Friends were exercised in honest labour for our spiritual health. They think us too light and chaffy, nay seem to think some very bad, and I fear they are not mistaken.

Sometimes the preacher came in for doubtful mention. In

May, 1792, Cresson noted that Mary Swett of Haddonfield, with some others,

began their family visits to the members of our meeting.  
May their labour of love receive the blessing.

I think nothing less than a sense of religious duty could induce a Friend of a small gift (though well approved) to leave her home and come on such an errand.

The Diary of Samuel Rodman of New Bedford contains several references to a woman who was evidently a bone of contention.<sup>13</sup> In February, 1823, he heard Mary Newhall preach several times, and he bore emphatic testimony to her "impressive and eloquent ministry." But others considered "her conduct and ministry as not consistent with the usages of the society," — on what grounds he does not state. Apparently the critics carried the day, for in the following year his mother and his aunt were dismissed from their station as elders because they had attended meetings of "persons who had been disowned by the society," by whom, he added, Mary Newhall must have been meant. He considered this action a restriction of the right of conscience and a want of Christian charity.

Rebecca Jones of Philadelphia was often mentioned in writings of the time. The Quaker historian, Rufus M. Jones, said that she was well educated and had decided gifts; he considered her one of the most influential preachers of her day. She made several preaching tours in Great Britain, and in 1784 encouraged the British women to press for a Yearly Meeting of their own, as was already customary in the United States. With two other American preachers, Mehetabel Jenkins and Rebecca Wright, she accompanied the British delegation which waited upon the men's meeting and finally won the coveted privilege.<sup>14</sup>

Many of these women undertook missions at great personal sacrifice. Elizabeth Coggeshall of Newport, Rhode Island, for example, was greatly distressed at leaving her children, the youngest of whom was only thirteen months old; but she felt a clear guidance to go.<sup>15</sup>

Hannah Barnard had unusual eloquence and intellectual ability as well as devotion. In 1798 she made a preaching tour of Great Britain and Ireland. While on this journey, doubts which she had already entertained about the accuracy of some parts of the Bible grew stronger and gradually her hearers began to object to her doctrine. Rufus Jones' estimate of her may be quoted:

She reveals a restrained rationalistic temper of mind, and she shows a much keener analysis than that exhibited by the Friends who challenged her. She was the gentle forerunner of our time, but she had the misfortune to live in a period that could not allow deviation in thought. She was . . . an honest soul trying . . . to find her way through from belief which her spirit had outgrown to a faith which satisfied her deepest awakened nature.

Although the modern historian may so characterize her, at the time she was called a deist and even an atheist, and was not only disowned as a minister but was "flung out of membership as a heretic."<sup>16</sup>

The list of Quaker women who preached could be extended almost indefinitely. The best known today is undoubtedly Lucretia Mott; her fame rests chiefly on her activities for emancipation and for women's suffrage, but she was eminent also as a preacher. George Combe, the British traveller already quoted, paid tribute to her. After hearing her at a meeting of the Hicksite Quakers, he wrote:<sup>17</sup>

Her manner of speaking was so clear, yet so soft and touching, and the matter of it was so full of wisdom and goodness, it drew tears from the eyes of C — and intensely rivetted my attention.

Although few women obtained recognition in other denominations, the record is not entirely blank. The story of Mrs. Barbara Heck, to whom belongs the credit for starting the Methodist Church in this hemisphere — in New York in 1766 and in Canada after the Revolution — has been told in *Colonial Women of Affairs*.<sup>18</sup> Methodist women have been particularly active in church work; yet aside from revivalists such as have been noted, no instance of a Methodist woman

preacher has been found.

The "Disciples of Christ," also known as "Christians," had some women preachers. In a history of the denomination B. B. Tyler declared:<sup>19</sup>

From the beginning woman has been treated with unusual consideration among the Disciples, and granted a rather remarkable degree of liberty in the departments of education and evangelical work.

No instances of women preachers in our period, however, are cited by Mr. Tyler or the other denominational historians consulted. But Caroline Dall made the statement, in *The College, Market and Court*: "Among the Methodists and 'Christians,' as well as among the Quakers, women have always been received as preachers." Mrs. Dall did not name any Methodists in proof of her assertion, but she gave an interesting account of two Christian ministers, Nancy Gore Cram of Weare, New Hampshire, and Abigail Hoag Roberts of Milford, New Jersey:<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. Cram began life as a Freewill Baptist, and undertook a mission to the Oneida Indians. The spiritual destitution of Central New York in the year 1812 affected her profoundly. Not a preacher of her own denomination in New Hampshire could be induced to go there. Disappointed in them, she hurried to Woodstock, Vermont, and laid the case before a conference of "Christian" elders and ministers, then in session. They understood her better. She hurried back to the field she had left; and, when the ministers followed her, they were astonished at her work. A church was built for her at Ballston Spa. She is described as a delicate, blue-eyed woman, with dark hair, dressing plainly in black silk, with her hair in a silk net; her whole appearance and manner befitting her work. She died in 1816, suddenly, in the fortieth year of her age.

Mrs. Roberts was one of her converts, — a woman who was a constant preacher, from June, 1814, to the June of 1841 in which she died, and for many years a settled pastor over the church in Milford, where a monument has been erected to her. . . . More than once, she was threatened by her own sex with "tar and feathers." She seems to have been, like Ann Hutchinson, a witty woman. "If you feel called

to preach," said one minister, to her, "why do you not go to the heathen?" — "So far as I can judge," she answered, "I am in the midst of them." She had a large family of children, and was distinguished for her household skill.

Her church, Mrs. Dall stated, had about four hundred members, and sometimes as many as twelve hundred in the congregation.

If Mrs. Cram was unable to get support from her own denomination, it was not because the Freewill Baptists objected to the ministry of women. Indeed, the early history of the movement by Rev. I. D. Stewart gives more attention and is more sympathetic to them than any other denominational history found. Mr. Stewart's discussion of the subject deserves quotation:<sup>21</sup>

The early history of the Freewill Baptists would be wanting in truthfulness, did it pass unnoticed those few women who labored in the cause with a spirit not akin to much of the retiring modesty of our day — that modesty which excuses persons from effort and responsibility in personal labor and social meetings because they are women. It has, from the first, been proclaimed as woman's right and duty to act and speak for her Savior; and this she has been encouraged to do in promiscuous meetings as well as those of her own sex exclusively.

Stewart named Mary Savage of Woolwich, Maine, who began to preach in 1791, as the first "female laborer in the gospel" of whom he knew.<sup>22</sup> He paid particular tribute to her ability to reconcile Christians who were at variance, — certainly a valuable trait in a minister. Miss Savage seems to have preached for only about a year, but Sally Parsons, who began work in 1792, served as a travelling missionary for some time.<sup>23</sup> In sparsely settled regions, and among newly established denominations, such service was common. The preacher was said to "itinerate," and it was considered a hard kind of service for a woman. Stewart noted that in 1797 a contribution was taken at the New Hampshire Yearly Meeting to buy a horse, saddle, and bridle for Miss Parsons' use,

"so long as she could see her way clear to travel and labor in the cause."

Stewart is our authority for claiming one woman preacher among "Calvinist Baptists." He noted in 1826 that Susan Humes of Thompson, Connecticut, who had been preaching among them for two years, transferred her affiliation and her labors to the Freewill Baptists.<sup>24</sup>

Stewart mentioned several other women preachers briefly, but his warmest praise was given to Clarissa Danforth, of Wethersfield, Connecticut:<sup>25</sup>

It would be inexcusable to pass in silence one who this year [1815] made her *debut* as a preacher. Her position will be neither assailed nor defended, but the facts impartially stated. Sufficient for the purposes of this work will it be to ignore that sentimental modesty which would have females participate in social worship only in meetings by themselves, and to acknowledge the hand of God and the blessings of salvation, whether they come through man's or woman's instrumentality.

[Miss Danforth] was a young lady of respectable parentage, good education, extraordinary talents, and undoubted piety. She was tall in person, dignified in appearance, easy in manners, and had all the elements of a noble woman. As a speaker, her language was ready and flowing, her gestures few and appropriate, and her articulation so remarkably clear and full, that she was distinctly heard in all parts of the largest house. Her meetings were everywhere fully attended, and she would hold hundreds with fixed attention for an hour, by the simplicity of her manner, the claims of her subject, and the novelty of her position. Her motive in preaching was generally regarded as good, her ability in sustaining herself for years was ample, and revivals attended her labors wherever she went, till marriage closed her public career.

And in view of all these complimentary remarks, let it be remembered that she was only a woman, a frail, imperfect, person.

Stewart referred to Miss Danforth a number of times. In summarizing the decade from 1810 to 1820 he wrote:

The sensational preacher of this decade was Clarissa H. Danforth. . . . Whoever could divest himself of prejudice

against a woman's appearing in public, listened to her preaching with profit as well as delight.

After her marriage in 1822, she moved to western New York and preached only occasionally.

In writing about Susan Humes, Stewart noted that "the elders approbated the public improvement of her gifts." The way in which Miss Danforth became a preacher he described thus:<sup>26</sup>

[After her conversion] she was active as a Christian, and her presence added much to social meetings, so that they were sometimes appointed with the understanding that she would improve much of the time. Thus she was led along into prominence, having the confidence of all, till she felt herself called of God to go and invite sinners to Christ; and she became a successful laborer in the Gospel.

Such informal preparation and ordination, if they can be so called, were favorable to the admission of women. Yet there were many other denominations no less informal, of which I have consulted dozens of histories, some of them as detailed as Stewart's, without finding more than one or two scanty references to women preachers. I have wondered whether some of the authors — all of them men — may have felt that a woman preacher was a monstrosity best forgotten. It is improbable that any large number, or perhaps any outstanding ones, would have been ignored. But it is hard to believe that various quite similar denominations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century differed so radically from the Freewill Baptists in regard to women.<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, — both as a historian and as a woman I am grateful to Mr. Stewart.

The Universalist denomination has had many women preachers. Phoebe Coffin Hanaford, distinguished as a speaker, reformer, and writer, who is quoted several times in these pages, was one of the best known of these.<sup>28</sup> Her ministry did not begin until after 1840, however, and few records have been found of Universalist women before that date. Richard Eddy, author of *Universalism in America*, chron-

icled only one earlier woman preacher. In describing the session of the Western Association held in Pennsylvania in 1811, he quoted from a clergyman who was present:<sup>29</sup>

[There were two] preachers of the Great Salvation [there], and singular as the circumstance may appear, one was a female. Maria Cook, then about thirty years of age, was escorted to the place by two gentlemen of the first respectability, from the town . . . where she had been visiting for several weeks and holding meetings. . . . Some of our brethren and friends were a little fastidious about allowing a woman to preach, supposing St. Paul forbade it, where he says, he suffered not a woman to teach, or to usurp authority, &c, while others thought differently, believing he would not have applauded the labors of so many female *helpers in the Lord*, if he did not, under suitable circumstances, approve of their public ministration. But the phenomenon of a female preacher appearing among us was so *extraordinary*, and curiosity was on tiptoe among the mass of the congregation, to hear a woman preach, our opposing brethren finally withdrew their objections, and she very cheerfully obliged us with a discourse. And there was not a sermon delivered with more eloquence, with more correctness of diction, or pathos, or listened to with more devout attention; nor was there one delivered during the session so highly applauded by the whole congregation, as the one she delivered.

[After that she was in great demand.] Her meetings, for a season, were the most numerously attended of any preacher of any denomination, who had ever traveled through the country, and were certainly quite advantageous to the cause of truth, as they called out many who, had it not been for the novelty of the circumstances, could not have been induced to attend a Universalist meeting; and who after obtaining some idea of the doctrine from her discourse were inclined to hear others, and her remuneration by contributions was far more liberal than any preacher of our order received, or perhaps any itinerant preacher of any denomination. But Miss Cook had numerous opposers to the course she pursued, irrespective of the doctrine she inculcated, and especially among her own sex, who thought it very improper, and even indecent for a woman to preach, and especially to itinerate as she did. She was quite sensitive; and the vituperations and uncharitable remarks which were constantly falling upon her ears considerably discomposed her, and

soon began to give quite a tone to her public discourses, by leading her into long arguments in vindication of her right to preach.

The writer saw her last in 1820, but said that she lived for some years longer, rather retired, in or near Geneva, New York.

Several Unitarian women won distinction as preachers during the second half of the nineteenth century, but not one has been discovered who preached before 1840. George Willis Cooke, author of *Unitarianism in America*, made this comment:<sup>30</sup>

The Unitarian body has been remarkable for the women of intellectual power and philanthropic achievement who have adorned its fellowship. . . . In the early Unitarian period, however, the special work of women was for the most part confined to the Sunday School and the sewing circle.

Many men have paid similar tribute to the women of their churches, but few at any time have encouraged them to use their gifts far outside the Sunday School and the sewing circle, — except in one direction. While the different denominations were admitting women grudgingly, if at all, into their home pulpits, a new opportunity for Christian service appeared to which they were welcomed with enthusiasm. This was the mission field. It may seem curious to exclude women from the pulpit on the ground that they are too modest, retiring, and fragile for public life, and yet raise no objection to their undergoing all the hazards to which missionaries were exposed. But people are inconsistent.

Home missions to convert the Indians dated back to pioneer days. After the Revolution, when settlers pushed westward too rapidly for town organization with church and school to keep pace, people in the East organized missions for these frontiersmen as well as for the Indians. Women responded warmly to this appeal, as many "Female Mite Societies" and kindred groups testified, but for some time the actual mission work was almost wholly left to men. As emphasis on education increased, however, many young women

were inspired to go west as teachers in mission schools. Several early educational leaders, notably Catherine Beecher, urged their pupils to do this as a vital patriotic service.

Foreign missions, however, had a greater effect on the position of women. The pioneering group of young men who petitioned in 1810 to be sent to the Asiatic mission field were all unmarried, but most of them proceeded at once to pick out wives. The biographer of Ann Haseltine — afterward Mrs. Adoniram Judson, — expatiated on the difficult decision which Mr. Judson's proposal of marriage required of her. Beside the usual personal considerations, there was the question whether she was worthy to take part in so great an enterprise. But this was not all:<sup>31</sup>

There was another circumstance which greatly increased the difficulty of the decision. No female had ever left America as a Missionary to the heathen. The general opinion was decidedly opposed to the measure. It was deemed wild and romantick in the extreme; and altogether inconsistent with prudence and delicacy. Miss H— had no example to guide and allure her. She met with no encouragement from the greater part of those persons, to whom she applied for counsel. . . . It was well, for the cause of Missions, that God assigned to Miss Haseltine the honourable yet difficult office of leading the way in this great enterprise. Her adventurous spirit, and her decision of character, eminently fitted her to resolve where others would hesitate, and to advance, where others might retreat. She did decide to go, and her determination, without doubt, has had some effect on the minds of other females, who have since followed her example.

Mrs. Judson was born in 1789 in Bradford, Massachusetts, and at Bradford Academy she gained as good an education as the time permitted. Here also went Harriet Atwood of Haverhill, who married Judson's associate Samuel Newell. These four young people — Mrs. Newell was not quite nineteen — sailed from Salem on February 19, 1812, for Calcutta. Their journey of four months was but the first of many trials. The story of the mission is well known and need not be repeated here. Before the year was out Mrs. Newell had died in Mauritius. The Judsons eventually established a Baptist mission in

Burma, where Mrs. Judson died in 1826.<sup>32</sup> Memoirs of both these ladies, with extensive quotations from their journals and letters, were soon published and had a wide circulation. The amount of introspection and self-abasement in these books may strike the modern reader as morbid, yet even so Mrs. Judson emerges as a person of independence and courage.

The journey from Calcutta to Burma had been attended with a variety of hazards. For some time it was doubtful whether the government would allow the party of three to proceed. After they had embarked, Mr. Judson and the other man left the ship, fearing lest they might be forcibly removed and placed in custody. Mrs. Judson was left on board in charge of the baggage, and she had to conduct the ensuing negotiations alone. She was distressed at the part which she, "a stranger, a female, and unprotected," was obliged to play, but she carried it through successfully.<sup>33</sup> Upon their arrival in Burma she began at once to study the language, and she learned to talk it fluently sooner than her husband. She was soon engaged in what became her chief task of teaching women and girls.

Women at home gave enthusiastic and sacrificial support to foreign missions, and a number of women's societies were formed with the express object of raising money for them. Yet it was some years before any woman went to the foreign field except to accompany her husband. In 1834 an American missionary returning from his station in Asia proposed that unmarried women should go to work for the women and children of the Orient. The idea was welcomed in England, where he first made the suggestion, but when he repeated it in New York it was opposed. As the author of *Western Women in Eastern Lands* put it, "The time was not ripe for it in America, ever more conservative in social reforms than the mother country." The women themselves were interested, and started an interdenominational society for the purpose; but the innovation was so stoutly resisted by the denomina-

tional boards — composed of men — that the project had to wait for thirty years.<sup>34</sup>

Some unmarried women reached foreign fields, however. Miss Sarah Cummings, a teacher from North Yarmouth, Maine, went to the Baptist mission in Burma early in 1833. She was placed in charge of a school in the country where she was the only white resident. After several bouts of jungle fever she died in August, 1834. On the anniversary of her arrival she had written home: "The evils I anticipated have not been realized, and a year happier than the past I have never seen."

In 1833, also, a Miss Farrington went with two married couples to the Methodist mission in Liberia. One couple soon died of a tropical fever and the other couple returned home, broken in health. But Miss Farrington remained. In 1834 she was joined by Miss Ann Wilkins of Philadelphia. At the close of a meeting at which a returned missionary had pleaded for more workers, Miss Wilkins had written him: "A sister who has a little money at command gives that little cheerfully, and is willing to give her life as a female teacher if she is wanted." The offer was accepted, and she labored for twenty years at Monrovia.<sup>35</sup>

These pioneers suffered almost every trial — illness, loss of their children, most of them an early death, and small results for their labors. Yet the survivors persevered, and new recruits came steadily. When a missionary wife died, a successor was soon found. Miss Philomela Thurston went to Burma in 1816 to become the second Mrs. Newell. Judson's second wife was the recently widowed Mrs. Sarah Boardman, who with her first husband had been a missionary for some years. She died in 1845; and an appreciative biography of her was written by the third Mrs. Judson.<sup>36</sup>

The number of American women who went as foreign missionaries was considerable. A list of Congregational missionaries before 1850 from Connecticut alone amounts to one hundred and seventy-five names, eighty-one of them women. Of these, forty-one were wives who accompanied

their husbands; eight — all of them missionaries to the American Indians — were unmarried; and thirty-one were married women whose husbands were not listed. This last group may have had husbands who were not natives of Connecticut, or they may have been widows.<sup>37</sup>

The Congregationalists and the Baptists were the pioneers in foreign missions. Within a few decades their example was followed by every major denomination, and stations set up in many distant countries. At the same time work for American Indians and other groups at home increased.

At first practically no attention was paid to the qualifications of a candidate for the mission field — except as to religious conviction. This was particularly true of women, who were little more than part of their husband's baggage. The high death rate is not surprising when one reads of a lady sent out by the Presbyterian board in 1833:<sup>38</sup>

Symptoms of pulmonary consumption began to show themselves in Mrs. Lowrie between the time of her marriage and embarkation; but it was hoped that a change of climate would remove them. The hope was vain. She died shortly after reaching Calcutta.

This casual attitude soon changed, however. It may be recalled that the first Mrs. Judson had not been sure that women ought to go to the foreign field, but her doubts had been quickly dispelled. Even before she reached Burma, she wrote home:<sup>39</sup>

Good female schools are extremely needed in this country. I hope no Missionary will ever come out here, without a wife, as she, in her sphere, can be equally useful with her husband. I presume Mrs. Marsham [an English missionary in Calcutta] does more good in her school than half the ministers in America.

People at home came to the same conclusion, and they soon accorded missionary wives a status never given to ministers' wives. Women on furlough, married or single, were encouraged to address audiences which would not have welcomed any other woman speaker. Gradually, standards of health and of education were raised for candidates of either sex.

Indeed, the need of special training for the mission field helped to breach some of the barriers to women's education, notably in medicine. It is generally recognized that women missionaries, by their labors and by their example, have been a strong influence in improving the position of women in many foreign lands. It should not be overlooked that the desire to help these foreign women did much to enlarge the opportunities for American women.

A modern writer — Rev. H. K. Rowe of Newton Theological School — estimated the role of American women as follows:<sup>40</sup>

Under the ban of silence in the churches from the time when Anne Hutchinson aroused the ire of the men of Puritan Boston until late in the nineteenth century, they played a noble part in the maintenance of religion. It was the mothers who taught the children the rudiments of religion in the home, and sent them to Sunday School, taught them in the class rooms, and sent them out into the world shielded by their prayers. It was the wives of ministers who sustained their courage, censored their sermons, aided in pastoral service and kept the house on a pecuniary allowance that was often pitifully small. Women were frequently the mainstay of the small churches. They raised money for church purposes by personal sacrifice and uncomplaining service. They almost alone made any contribution to the social life of the church. They constituted the largest part of church membership. They were the most regular attendants at the appointed meetings of the church. They were organized in mission circles for encouraging and contributing to missions from the beginning of the activity. They were the burden bearers of religion. Not until they received social and political recognition were they welcomed to general positions of ecclesiastical responsibility, but that privilege and responsibility was met efficiently when the opportunity came.

This is a noble tribute, expressed with a sympathy which makes one reluctant to criticize. It is beyond the scope of this study to consider how far the women of today receive "general positions of ecclesiastical responsibility." That they were not "welcomed" to them in the years before 1840 is an understatement.

## CHAPTER IV

### *For Hours of Ease*

As soon as men acquire a bare minimum of the necessities of existence, they look about for ways to make life amusing. Although many of the early settlers took their pleasures chiefly in preaching and prayer meetings, there were others in even the strictest colonies who sought less rarefied means of relaxation.

Much more is known about the theatre than about other forms of entertainment; yet it is probable that concerts, readings, circuses and the like were enjoyed by vastly more people. Certainly they were available in more places, and they were viewed with less distrust by the puritanically minded. When in the mid-nineteenth century Fanny Kemble and Charlotte Cushman gave dramatic readings, they delighted thousands who even then would not have set foot inside a regular theatre.

There were readers before Kemble and Cushman. *The New York Mercury and Advertiser* for April 1, 1797, carried the following announcement:

Public  
READINGS & RECITATIONS  
Moral, Critical, and Entertaining.  
Mrs. Melmoth

Anxious to add to other Amusements of this city so refined, so elegant, and so useful a species of Entertainment as PUBLIC READING and RECITATION, has resolved to this purpose to appropriate Three Evenings. She intends this as a prelude to Private Instruction to Young Ladies in this most necessary branch of Education.

The price for the course was twelve shillings. The program for the first evening included selections from Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Sterne, and Dryden. Mrs. Melmoth was the leading actress of the day.

A minor member of the same theatrical company followed in Mrs. Melmoth's footsteps some years later, with an equally ambitious program. In the *Aurora* (Philadelphia) for June 13, 1806, Mrs. Edmund Burke Hamilton announced a series of readings to consist, she said, of pieces "in the sublime, descriptive, narrative, pathetic, and heroic." One program may be quoted:

Cato's Soliloquy on the immortality of the soul	Addison
Picture of Slavery	Sterne
Eve on first beholding Adam	Milton
Cato's oration in the Senate	Addison
Sempronius's oration for war	Addison
The Rebel	Shenstone
Elvira's Soliloquy	Sheridan
Comus's address to Night	Milton
Invocation to Mirth	Milton
The Schuylkill	Moore
A Fable	Gay
Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music	Dryden

A substantial offering! Mrs. Hamilton was probably the lady referred to with faint praise in Dr. Bentley's diary, November 4, 1806:

A new thing among us. A Miss Hamilton is to exhibit specimens of reading & reciting & has issued her tickets at  $\frac{1}{2}$  a dollar. Dr. Holyoke recollects a man formerly attempting something of this kind in Salem with some success. The weather was not favorable but above 200 persons chiefly young were assembled in the evening in the concert hall. She did not excell, but in the pathetic, and had no variety of accent. Her voice when she was not distinctly heard appeared to utter with explosions and she added little of the soul to her pieces. But upon the whole, as reading is or ought to be a part of the rational pleasure of all men in civil society, we cannot refuse any pleasing attempts to improve a pleasure which all should covet & all men should enjoy.

Concerts seem to have been more popular than readings. An entry in the diary of President Washington shows that the weather could not keep him away: "February 28 [1797] Wind variable, and grt. appearances all day of Snow. Mer. 35. Went to Mrs. Grattons concer (t) in the Evening."<sup>1</sup> George Combe noted several concerts in Boston given by Madame Carodari Allen; in October, 1838, for example, she sang at the Perkins Institute for the Blind.<sup>2</sup>

A card in the *New York Daily Advertiser* for November 6, 1792, called attention to the last in a series of three concerts at which a Mrs. Van Hagen was to play and Mrs. Metchler sing. Mrs. Metchler (known on the colonial stage as Fanny Storer) was a popular actress,<sup>3</sup> and Mrs. Van Hagen, "lately from Amsterdam," was a professional musician. The same paper announced on December 26, that she would teach both vocal and instrumental music. For some reason, music was usually taught by a man, even in schools where most of the teachers were women. Mrs. Van Hagen challenged this convention:

As motives of delicacy may induce parents to commit the tuition of young ladies, in this branch of education, to one of their own sex, and the female voice, from its being in unison, is better adapted to teach them singing than that of the other sex, which is an octave below, she flatters herself that she may be indulged with their approbation and the protection of a respectable public.

Whether her personal hopes were justified is not known, but certainly, in spite of the "octave below," men continued to hold almost a monopoly of music teaching.

The singers just noted, and in fact the majority of performers for some time to come were foreigners. The following outburst from *Niles' Weekly Register* for April 25, 1818, can therefore be appreciated; italics are the editor's:

*Mrs. French.* — Always pleased to notice superior excellence of any thing of *Domestic* growth or product, we are delighted to be informed of the *complete* success that has attended Mrs. French, in her late concerts at New York —

that great city, in which, more than in any other city in America, "*all the world meets together.*"

She has given two concerts there — the first was attended by about 600, and the second by upwards of 1200 persons — the house was overflowing!

The writer went on to say that Mrs. French was already well known in Baltimore, from her frequent appearance there in private parties and oratorios.

On January 30, 1836, Niles noted another successful singer:

We see it stated in the newspapers — that a young lady, a perfect enchantress (so called) Miss Russell, has come out at New Orleans, where it is said she throws Pasta, Malibran, and Catalini totally in the shade — warbling from octave to octave, through the highest alto notes [sic] of Sonntag down to the rich and melodious intonations of Pasta. She is an American.

The slight air of reserve with which this remarkable praise is repeated might be expected in a modern editor, but it is unusual in Niles. There is no evidence to indicate that either Mrs. French or Miss Russell justified these paeans.

"Sacred concerts" by professionals had been enjoyed in the middle colonies even before the Revolution, and in the early nineteenth century they became popular everywhere. In an advertisement in the *Maine Gazette* Mr. and Mrs. Ostinelli advertised "a CONCERT of SACRED Music," at Bath, on October 18, 1822. Mrs. Knight, a popular member of a theatrical company playing in Washington in 1830, announced in the *National Intelligencer* that she would give an "Oratorio of Miscellaneous Sacred Music," on December 30, at the Unitarian Church, one half of the proceeds to go to the Washington Relief Society. She would sing, among other selections, "With Verdure Clad" and "Angels Ever Bright and Fair;" and a second singer, Mrs. Franklin, offered "The Widow of Nain" by Beethoven and "Ye Limpid Streams" by Handel.<sup>4</sup>

The concerts so far noted were evidently intended for music lovers. Concerts with balls to follow were of a more

social nature, and the person giving them may have been a manager rather than a musician. The *Columbian Chronicle* (Georgetown) for July 21, 1795, announced that Mrs. Sully and Mrs. Pick invited the ladies and gentlemen of Georgetown to a concert and ball, to be held the second night following, at "Mrs. Doyle's Long Room."

Several similar notices have been found in which women figured. Miss Choate of Boston, advertising an "Exhibition and Ball" for December 21, 1825, took the opportunity to thank the public for the encouragement which she had received, and which "by unremitting and punctual attention to her profession" she hoped to merit.<sup>5</sup> Just what her profession was is not indicated, but the phrase suggests that she was a teacher, perhaps of dancing.

Most of the dancing teachers noted, like the music teachers, were men, but a number of women were professional dancers. The *Boston Courier* advertised in its issue for November 28, 1825, a circus at which Mrs. Tatnall would dance "a grand Pas Seul." Frequently a program of songs and dances concluded a theatrical performance. Thus in Washington Miss Hunt took part in a double hornpipe after a presentation of "The Maid of Bristol;" and on another occasion, Mrs. West, as "Jessie the Flower of Dunblane" and Miss Dupree as "Peggy" executed a "Scotch Dance, called Donald of Dundee," to follow the play "Bluebeard, or Female Curiosity."<sup>6</sup>

On other occasions exhibitions of dancing formed the *chef d'oeuvre* of an entertainment. Mr. Manfredi, for example, at the head of a company of "three ladies and two gentlemen" announced an elaborate program at the Washington Theatre on November 17, 1806.<sup>7</sup> It would be opened by Miss Louisa, with a dance in character on the tight rope, with the balance pole. Miss Catherine would give a comic dance, and then a serious one, both on the tight rope. Madame Manfredi would then offer

a Turkish dance on the rope, with the balance pole, — she will perform the feat of the moving board, and take a colla-

tion on the rope in the Turkish style, seated at a chair at a table.

The men then appeared for some numbers, after which Miss Catherine was to dance without the balance pole and "perform several surprising and agreeable feats on the rope." Madame Manfredi having had time to recover from the Turkish collation, was then to play on the mandolin without the balance pole; and Miss Catherine would wind up the evening with a hornpipe.

The *New England Palladium* for April 26, 1808, announced an unusual entertainment thus:

#### M A D A M E B R E S C H A R D

*Our* Ladies will never have so good an opportunity of delighting themselves with female grace and elegance, in so novel and peculiar a view, as in the Exhibition of Madame Breschard, this evening. To her ordinary and powerful evolutions she is to add the majesty and grace of a fine Amazon, seated on her highly caparisoned Courser, trampling, prancing, and foaming with the pomp and pride of his *plumed and lofty Conductress*. The most peculiar interest has excited every spectator as Mme Breschard enters; and a sensible anxiety runs through the fibre of her universal admirers, as she rises into her saddle with an expression of mingled loftiness, and timidity, and presses on her steed as she flies through the Circus. All who love to smile on delicate and assiduous merit, will feel pleasantly indeed, in encouraging its claims this evening.

Madame Breschard must have had an ingenious publicity expert, or an admirer probably not drawn from among "our ladies." Several more commonplace notices of her performances in Boston were noted; that of February 16, 1808, for example, stated merely that she would "perform several feats astonishing for one of her sex." Her husband was joint proprietor of the first circus to visit Boston.

When P. T. Barnum began as a showman in 1835, his first attraction was a deformed colored woman named Joice Heth, "reputed to have been the nurse of George Washington and to be over one hundred and sixty years old."<sup>8</sup> This

claim was not received with implicit confidence, but nevertheless people paid money to see her.

Joice Heth was not the first woman to be exhibited on account of her deformities: two decades earlier, a Miss Honeywell had begun to attract attention. Her first appearance in Boston, in December, 1808, was thus described in the local papers:<sup>9</sup>

Miss Martha Ann Honeywell, a young lady born without hands, and with only three toes on one foot; who is not so much a subject of wonder and admiration for her great ingenuity and elegance in embroidering flowers fit for framing, and in cutting with rich variety and taste gentlemen's watch papers, as for the peculiar felicity of her disposition, and her entertaining style of conversation, diffusing gaiety all around her; — indeed her cheerful and sportively engaging aspect at once dispel those painful sensations which the deprivation of her limbs excite in the sympathizing breasts of her visitors, which give place to the most felicitous impressions, resulting in an admiration for the unparalleled good sense and cheerful resignation of this Young Lady to her peculiar lot, which she has rendered by her persevering industry, spirit, and wisdom a happiness to herself and a very instructive and consolatory example to the world generally and to her own sex particularly. She threads her needle and ties the knot.

Large Flowers, fancy Pieces, Watch Papers, &c., for sale by the Young Lady at the above place.

Admittance 25 cents, children half price.

N. B. Miss Rogers, who resembled the above young lady in some respects, is now at the city of Washington.

Evidently Miss Honeywell was not the first in her line, but she became the best known. The following year Dr. Bentley saw her in Salem. His account of her tallied well with the advertisement, and he added:<sup>10</sup>

She is about seventeen years of age, and is attended by her mother from New York. Her head is well formed, her look intelligent, & her understanding clear, and her conversation and accent very pleasing and inspiring respect.

She traveled widely, and added to her stock of accomplishments from time to time. A Louisville newspaper for 1830

advertised her visit, and mentioned that she could cut out the Lord's Prayer to look like copper-plate engraving.<sup>11</sup> Her price had gone up to fifty cents, but it included a "profile likeness cut in a few seconds."

R. W. G. Vail in *Random Notes on the Early American Circus* recorded a number of girls and women who were exhibited as freaks.<sup>12</sup> Susan and Deborah Tripp, at Peale's Museum, New York, in 1829, were justifiably advertised as fat children. Susan, then not quite six years old, weighed 205 pounds. Either she died or lost her looks, for nothing more is heard of her. But Deborah, then three years old and 125 pounds in weight, had grown to 200 pounds when she appeared in Poughkeepsie, only two years later. The Tripp family must have set a good table.

There were dwarfs too. Caroline Clarke of Philadelphia appeared with her brother as the Lilliputian Songsters in 1819 and '20. Three tiny sisters from Falmouth, Massachusetts — Hannah, Rebecca, and Abigail Hatch — were on view in New York in 1823; but the Canadian sisters, who appeared in 1835, Emily and Margaret Martin, were the smallest — although both in their twenties, their height measured thirty and thirty-two inches respectively.

A group of women quite different from the others described in this chapter seem to belong here, although neither the ladies themselves nor their patrons would have classed them as entertainers. Fortune-tellers and "spiritualists" did not seek the limelight as frankly as actresses, and few diarists or letter-writers have been found who confessed to personal knowledge of them. Yet they were evidently not rare. Combe was much distressed by the prevalence of such people. While in Philadelphia, in 1839, he wrote:<sup>13</sup>

The following advertisement appeared in the *Public Ledger* . . .  
er, a newspaper, a few days ago. "A Card. Madam Dusar, thankful for past favors, respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of Philadelphia that her residence is No. 6, Watson's alley, *Locust, first alley below Tenth*, where she will be happy to solve all questions relating to dreams,

marriages, journeys, losses, gains, and all other lawful business, sickness, or death."

Combe, who was anxious that the American experiment in democracy should succeed, thought it particularly serious that voters should believe such trash. When he went to New York, a few weeks later, he was told that the situation was just as bad there. He quoted an article from the *Journal of Commerce* which stated that fortune-telling<sup>14</sup>

has become such a regular branch of business in New York, that cards with the names and residences of professed fortune-tellers are almost daily handed to ladies and gentlemen while walking through the streets. The matter having, however, reached the ears of Justice Merritt in the shape of a complaint, he sent officers to the residence of a Mrs. Louisa Kraft in Christye street, and a Mrs. Theresa George Medier in Orchard street. . . . The officers . . . had their fortunes told them for the low sum of fifty cents each, and then marched off the two ladies to the police-office as common vagrants. Mrs. Louisa Kraft, on being examined, very candidly admitted "that she did not pretend to tell the fortune of any individual; but if persons were foolish enough to go to her for that purpose, she would receive the money." The two ladies were both ordered to find bail in \$500, to be of good conduct for one year, and in default of such bail were committed to prison.

Some incidents recorded by the Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer suggest that a more complacent attitude toward mediums prevailed in the United States a few years later.<sup>15</sup> She herself was open-minded as to the possibility of communicating with the dead, but she was critical of most so-called manifestations. She described a visit made in September, 1850, to two sisters named Fish, who moved from place to place and were then practising in Rochester, New York. They seemed to be making a good living and Miss Bremer thought that they were frauds. About a year later she went with William Ellery Channing to see a girl in New York, who was supposed to be in touch with the spirit of her dead father. Miss Bremer was rather non-committal about her

own reaction, but she wrote that the scene "produced a painful impression on Channing." She continued:

There are in the United States at this time, especially in the North, a great number of clairvoyants of all grades; and mediums, "spiritual knockings," and many other dark spiritual phenomena belong to the order of the day. They are totally rejected by many, but earnestly accepted by others.

The information regarding the women so far presented is fragmentary. One is on firmer ground in considering actresses, for the history of the American theatre is well documented. The theatrical season had become a welcome part of life in the cities of the southern and middle colonies before the Revolution. Puritan resistance had by no means died out, however, and the approach of war gave it a temporary advantage. In 1774, and again in 1778, Congress called for the immediate suspension of "shows, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments." Some small theatres continued to function, but most of the members of the American Company — by all odds the leading group of colonial players — withdrew to Jamaica, where they stayed for about a decade.<sup>16</sup>

The American Company did not find Jamaica a rewarding field, and during 1784 and '85 its members drifted back to the mainland. Late in 1784 a small contingent reopened the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, and in the following summer they carried the campaign to the John Street Theatre in New York. At first their group was very small — six men and two women. Mrs. Allen was leading lady, and Miss Caroline Durang, a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, played minor parts and sang. During 1785 Lewis Hallam and John Henry became joint managers, and they promptly obtained some valuable recruits. For seven years they held a practical monopoly of the American stage, but in 1791-92 a schism in the ranks lead to the withdrawal of some important members, who formed a rival organization in Philadelphia. After that there were always at least two good companies in the field.<sup>17</sup>

Conditions were still difficult. Although the Congressional edict was repealed in 1789, some local prohibitions continued in force, and every city from Philadelphia northward contained a powerful group bitterly opposed to play-acting. In an effort to propitiate public opinion, the theatrical proponents resorted to various subterfuges. The building was named "the Opera House" (in Philadelphia) or the "Exhibition Hall" (in Boston); the performances were called concerts or lectures; and plays received edifying titles. *Hamlet*, for example, became *Filial Piety*, and *She Stoops to Conquer* masqueraded as *Improper Education*. Here is an advertisement of a performance during the first Boston season:<sup>18</sup>

By particular Desire, New Exhibition Room, Board-Alley,  
On Wednesday Evening, the 17th October, 1792, will be  
delivered

A Moral Lecture, in five parts,  
In which the Fatal Effects of Vice will be  
exemplified in the Tragical History of Jane Shore.

---

Between the Lecture, various feats of Tumbling. The Moral Lecture will be concluded with an entertaining one, called  
The Mock Doctor, or the Dumb Lady cured.

Nine people took part in each of the "lectures," the women being Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Morris in the "moral" one, and Miss Smith and Miss Solomon in the "entertaining" one. John Hancock, then governor of Massachusetts, thought the camouflage somewhat too thin, and an insult to the Commonwealth. His effort to have the manager arrested lead to a near-riot, and the season came to an abrupt close.<sup>19</sup> Within fourteen months, however, a better theatre had been built and a regular company engaged. Actors still had plenty of trials, but after the opening of the Federal Street Theatre in Boston, on February 3, 1794, no one seriously challenged the right of the theatre to exist.

The history of the American stage will not be traced further, but brief glimpses of some actresses may show some-

thing about the women who sought a livelihood or a career on the American stage, and how far they succeeded.

The leading lady under the Hallam-Henry management was Mrs. Elizabeth Morris; she had made her American debut in 1770, and was now in her prime. She is described as tall and elegant in appearance, spirited in acting, and an ideal "fine lady" of high comedy. This character on the stage consorts oddly with her manner off it; she cultivated mystery, and was so seldom seen by daylight that when the public did catch sight of her, great excitement resulted. Rivalry between Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Henry, the wife of the manager, contributed to the break-up of the company in 1791-92, and Mrs. Morris was among the seceders who established themselves in Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. Hallam, wife of Henry's associate, also proved a storm center. As Miss Tuke, she began playing minor parts in 1785; she was then described as "young, pretty, and awkward." She married Hallam in 1794, and according to Dunlap, the historian of the early American theatre, "became an actress of merit, and improved in beauty and elegance." Early in 1795 while acting in Cumberland's play *The Jew* she showed signs of intoxication, and the affair caused so much excitement that for a while she withdrew from the boards. Hodgkinson, a gifted English actor who had joined the company soon after the schism, made the most of her lapse and insisted that she should not return. The public took sides with violence, many people believing that Mrs. Hallam was a martyr to Hodgkinson's jealousy. On one occasion Hallam and Hodgkinson quarreled about her during a performance, and a riot resulted. Later Mrs. Hallam took advantage of an appearance as Lady Teazle to offer the public a long apology, which concluded as follows:

I may through inadvertency have stray'd  
But who by folly never was betray'd?  
If e'er my judgment play'd the foolish part  
I acted not in concert with my heart.  
I boldly can defy the world to say

From my first entree to the present day,  
Whate'er my errors, numerous or few,  
I never wanted gratitude to you.  
On your indulgence still I'll rest my cause;  
Will you support me with your kind applause?  
You verify the truth of Pope's fine line —  
"To err is human; to forgive, divine."

However the public felt, Hodgkinson restrained any impulse toward divinity. There is little doubt that Mrs. Hallam's "errors" had been fairly numerous, but after she had left the company and the affair should have been considered settled, he published a long and bitter pamphlet giving his side of the story.<sup>21</sup> It may be added that although many actors in America have cut short their careers by drunkenness, Mrs. Hallam's case is practically unique among actresses.

After the break-up of the old American Company in 1792, both fragments looked about for reinforcements. It happened that Mrs. Melmoth, already famous in Great Britain as a tragic actress, had come to America to try her luck with a series of readings, (mentioned above) and she was persuaded to join the New York Company. She is said to have been handsome, with a beautiful voice; but she was so stout that her debut in *The Grecian Daughter* almost ended in disaster. When she exclaimed to the villain, about to stab her aged father, "Strike here; here's blood enough!" the audience shouted with laughter. Nevertheless, she regained their interest; and she continued to play the part, but with that line omitted. In roles such as Lady Macbeth, and as Queen Elizabeth in *The Earl of Essex*, she was considered magnificent.

Mrs. Melmoth's declining years were serene. When she retired, she was able to buy a small dairy farm not far from Brooklyn, and she sold milk in New York. She did enough teaching to supply congenial occupation and some additional income. She died in 1823, at the age of seventy-four.<sup>22</sup>

Mrs. Oldmixon, the most important addition to the Philadelphia Company at that time, also showed rural tastes. As

Miss George, she had won great applause in England as a singer and a comedian. Shortly before coming to America she had married Sir John Oldmixon, noted as "the Bath beau," but in deference to American prejudice she never used her title. Apparently Sir John, who came with her, adjusted himself readily to their new environment. A London newspaper of 1796 carried the following item, the truth of which is corroborated by Dunlap:<sup>23</sup>

Sir John Oldmixon, whose equipage was once the gaze of Bond Street, is now a gardener near Philadelphia. He drives his own cabbages to market in his own cart. His wife, formerly Miss George, sings in the theatre and returns in the conveyance which brought the vegetables to sale.

The Philadelphia company had other interesting English recruits. The Rowson family — William, his wife Susannah, and his sister Charlotte — joined it at the same time as Mrs. Oldmixon. Mrs. Rowson, whose subsequent career as a school mistress has been noted in a previous chapter, was already famous as a novelist, and she proved a versatile member of the company. She used her literary talent in writing prologues and incidental songs, adapting plays, and composing at least one original comedy and one comic opera. In addition she acted no less than eighty-eight parts, most of them secondary, such as Mistress Quickly, the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Audrey in *As you Like It*. According to a critic in the *Maryland Journal* for September 19, 1795, she played the nurse in *Romeo* admirably. The writer did not consider her a great actress, but said that she was always good; and he commented upon her readiness to take a part at short notice, and to keep to her engagements even when ill.

The Rowsons stayed with the Philadelphia Company for three years, playing in Annapolis and Baltimore as well as Philadelphia. In 1796 they went to Boston for a season, where Mrs. Rowson brought out another comedy, and had slightly more important parts. It seems probable that the Rowsons had entered the theatrical profession purely from necessity. At any rate, they all abandoned it when Mrs. Rowson opened

a school in Boston. She continued to write occasionally for the stage, and is said to have been extremely generous in helping distressed actors and actresses.<sup>24</sup>

The companies established in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, played engagements of several weeks in near-by cities from time to time. Dr. Bentley noted with disapproval some such appearances in Salem.<sup>25</sup> Eliza Southgate, on the other hand, wrote enthusiastically of a visit of the Boston Company to Portland, Maine, in July, 1801:

Last night I attended the *Theater*, "Speed the plough" was performed, and I assure you very *decently*; the characters in general were well supported. . . . Mrs. Powell as Miss Blandford delighted us all. How I admire that woman! She is perfectly at home on the stage; — her private character we know is unexceptionable. — As for Mrs. Harper, she is my aversion — for as Shakespeare says, she will "tear a passion to tatters, to very rags;" and she is too indecent ever to appear on the stage.

Mrs. Harper — formerly Miss Smith, and second wife of the actor who for a time was manager of the Boston company — had played important roles in Boston and in Charleston. Mrs. Powell, when Miss Elizabeth Harrison, had made her American debut as Christina in *Gustavus Vasa*. Her husband, Snelling Powell, is said to have been one of the most successful managers Boston ever had. After his death in 1821 Mrs. Powell shared in the management for several years. She had been a protégé of Mrs. Siddons and was a gifted Shakespearean actress. Dunlap says that her beauty and talent placed her at the head of her profession in New England. She died in Boston in 1843, in her seventieth year.<sup>26</sup>

An interesting actress of this time was a Mrs. Wheatley. Born in Nova Scotia, she was taken as a child to New York, where she made her debut in 1805, when about fifteen years old. She did not attract particular attention, and upon her marriage she left the stage. Like many other women, however, she returned to it when her husband lost his money. Then, in the words of Ireland:

Severe study, long practise, and the strictest adherence to nature, finally gave her the position she aimed at, and for more than twenty years, in the line of comic, middle-aged and old women, rich or poor, vulgar or refined — indeed of every grade, she was entirely unrivalled on the American stage.

- Mrs. Wheatley is sometimes overlooked by historians of the theatre, yet Dunlap corroborates Ireland's testimony:

Success has crowned her industry and talent, and she has long been one of the ornaments of the New York theatre. She first exerted herself in this arduous profession for the support of her mother, and afterward for the maintenance and education of her children. Her reward is an approving conscience, competency, and the esteem of all who know her. For several seasons her talents were not appreciated, perhaps not discovered.

Ireland paid tribute to her "fine artistic taste, agreeable face and person, and the most thorough executive ability," and dilated on the charm of her personal character. She retired in 1843, and, he said, adhered so firmly to her intention that "an offer of \$1000 for a single night's performance has since been respectfully declined." Two of Mrs. Wheatley's daughters and a son all began theatrical life in childhood and won considerable success in adult life.<sup>27</sup>

Mrs. Ann Brunton Merry, one of the finest actresses who graced the American stage during this period, joined the Philadelphia company in 1796. She had made a successful debut in England at the age of fifteen, but upon her marriage to the poet and playwright, Robert Merry, she left the stage in deference to his wishes. Later, financial troubles weakened his objections to her acting, and when an offer came from America, he gave his consent; he was willing apparently that she should act in a foreign land and among republicans! He accompanied her, and died in Baltimore in 1798. Five years later she married Thomas Wignell, the Philadelphia actor-manager. Upon his sudden death soon afterward, his widow gave notice that she and her late husband's partner would carry on the business as hitherto, and this arrangement con-

tinued for about four years. Mrs. Merry (became Mrs. Warren by a third marriage) died in 1808, when only thirty-seven years old, and, in the words of Dunlap, "in the full possession of all those eminent qualifications which rendered her, as a tragedian, only second to Mrs. Siddons." Mrs. Merry has the distinction of being the first actress to appear in this country as a star; in that capacity she received \$100 a week and a benefit in New York during the summer of 1801.<sup>28</sup>

The place of preeminence which Mrs. Merry had held was soon taken by Mrs. John R. Duff (Mary Ann Dyke), whom the elder Booth pronounced "the greatest actress in the world." She was born in London in 1794, the eldest of three beautiful sisters who made an early debut as dancers on the Dublin stage. Thomas Moore fell in love with Mary and addressed several poems to her, and after her marriage to the Irish actor Duff he consoled himself with her younger sister.

The Duffs came to Boston late in 1810. John Bernard, who saw them play the title roles in *Romeo and Juliet*, thought them the handsomest couple he had ever seen. They appeared in all the important American cities, and in 1828 returned to England for an engagement at Drury Lane. Mrs. Duff is known to have taken at least two hundred and twenty different roles. She was particularly famous as Isabella in *The Fatal Marriage*, and as Juliet, Portia, and Lady Macbeth.

Mr. Duff died in 1831, and his widow had a struggle to support her ten children. According to her biographer, she was not a good business woman, and was too modest to command as much attention or as high prices as she deserved. In 1836 she married Joel G. Sevier of New Orleans, and apparently left the theatre soon afterward. Her death in 1857 went unnoticed, and her fame seemed entirely forgotten. But recent historians of the stage have done justice to her.<sup>29</sup>

An English-born girl whose career lasted until the close of the century made her American debut in 1827, at the age of sixteen. Clara Fisher had already won success in England as a child actress; in America she became a craze. At first she took juvenile — often boy's — parts, and she wore her

hair bobbed. She is said to have been "bewitching rather than pretty, spirited, artless, and gay." Hotels, race horses, stage coaches, and fashions were named after her, and her slight lisp became an epidemic. In the issue of April 25, 1829, *Niles Register* quoted the following letter which had appeared in the *Charleston City Gazette*:

I have beheld — I have admired — I have idolized — the masterpiece of nature! The perfection of art! The glory of her sex! The wonder of the world! Oh! had I thought to comprehend, or language to describe the excellence of the fair enchantress; the transcendent merits of the lovely *Clara!* Oh! had I the inspiration of her ethereal mind — the golden pinions of her soaring fancy! that I could faintly portray what I would glory to emulate. But it were fruitless to essay, her talents require not the tribute of words; they are superior to praise! "*Omni exceptione major*" be the motto of her fame.

Niles, who was seldom guilty of an understatement himself, called this "the cap-sheaf of extravagance," but it seems to have expressed the popular opinion.

Miss Fisher soon graduated from the juvenile class, and unlike many infant prodigies she made a substantial success in adult parts. Her life was a happy one. In 1834 she married James Maeder, a musician, and three of their seven children were identified with the stage. She died in Metuchen, New Jersey, in 1898, — the oldest American actress of the time. An actor who knew her well wrote of her, "By her exertions, a large family have been respectably educated and established in life, while in private society no one in the whole profession is more universally esteemed."<sup>30</sup>

Most of the actors and actresses who appeared in the United States before 1840 may properly be called Americans; they settled in this country and they died here. But with few exceptions, they were foreign-born and they started their careers abroad, generally in England. During the following decades, some actors and actresses of American birth received honors in Europe. Prominent among them was Charlotte Cushman, who was born in Boston. She began acting in 1835,

when only nineteen, in order to support her widowed mother and four younger children, but the greater part of her career, as actress, manager, and dramatic reader, falls outside the scope of this study.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of actresses are known to us only through theatre programs, critical notices in newspapers, or casual mention in a theatre-goer's diary, and when they left the stage they usually dropped from sight. No one was interested in preserving information about any except the most successful performers.

The social position of the profession was uncertain. People of puritanical leanings looked askance at the stage. Many others seemed to combine general suspicion with an eagerness to make exceptions in particular cases. Wood remarked that while Mrs. Merry was acting in Baltimore in 1793 and '94, she "experienced the elegant hospitality which the people of Baltimore know so well how to dispense." In speaking of Philadelphia a year or two later, he noted that "several persons of education condescended to notice the actors and plays."<sup>32</sup> Before long, most successful actors and actresses received quite as much attention as they could accept; life in a stock company was far too exacting to allow much time for society.

It is difficult to make any generalization about the moral standards of actresses. It was common for families to act in the same company, and many women sought the stage, or continued on it, as a means of supporting relatives. Actresses certainly had to work hard, and it appears probable that the majority of them were as correct in their conduct and had as much essential goodness as any other group of women.

On the other hand, there were irregularities. The actor Hodgkinson, who bore so hard on the errors of Mrs. Hallam, came to this country in order to marry a beautiful actress named Brett, oblivious of the claims of a woman who had lived with him for years as Mrs. Hodgkinson and had borne him several children. It is probable that the existence of this family in England was not known to his American admirers.<sup>33</sup>

A similar situation of about the same time received plenty of publicity, however. Alexandre Placide and his wife played together in pantomime, yet in 1796 Alexandre eloped with a very young actress named Caroline Wrighten. The girl's mother, an actress of merit, was completely prostrated by what she called "an unforeseen and unnatural event," and in fact died not many days later, it was said of a broken heart. The affair did not interfere with Placide's professional career, and the new Mrs. Placide (as she was obligingly called) became popular on the southern stage.<sup>34</sup>

Current ideas of "female delicacy," which played havoc with health and even prevented a woman shop-keeper from climbing a step-ladder, interfered less with actresses than might have been supposed. The attitude toward their apparel on the stage was peculiar. Wood, writing in 1854, recalled an incident of 1799, — the lady affected was a popular English dancer appearing in this country with her husband:<sup>35</sup>

An unaccountable severity on the score of dress *in dancing* prevailed, while an exact as well as ungraceful imitation of men in the performance of male characters by women, was tolerated to an extent which it would be dangerous now to follow, even in a minor theatre. What will our ladies think of Mrs. Whitlock's dress, as the peasant boy Fidele in *Cymbeline*? It consisted of a tight vest, and pantaloons of a sky blue satin, fitting closely, and scarcely the apology of a very short cloak. This was the dress of one of the largest female performers ever seen on our stage, and excited no disapprobation or remark. Mrs. Marshall, too, degraded the stage on her benefit night by the performance of *Marplot*, in a fashionable male habit of the day. . . . Mrs. Byrne, whose profession was that of a dancer, appeared on the other hand at the Chestnut Street theatre in a dress so ample, that it would now appear unwieldy. The length of her dress was so great that it would scarcely be now approved, the style of dancing being as delicate as that branch of art can well permit. Yet she was met by a degree of disapprobation rarely witnessed in a theatre. After a withdrawal of a few nights, she re-appeared, with the addition of a pair of pantalettes, tied at the ankle. But the effort to remove the difficulty failed.

— I can well remember the mortification and distress of Mrs. Byrne under the cruel insults she suffered.

Wood implied that the audiences outside of Philadelphia did not object to Mrs. Byrne's original costume, and she appeared elsewhere with success. But Ireland related a somewhat similar incident which occurred in New York in 1827, at the American debut of a French dancer, Madame Francis-quy Hutin:<sup>36</sup>

An anxious look of curiosity and expectation dwelt on every face, but when the graceful danseuse came bounding like a startled fawn upon the stage, her light and scanty drapery floating in air, and her symmetrical proportions liberally displayed by the force of a bewildering pirouette, the cheeks of the greater portion of the audience were crimsoned with shame, and every lady in the lower tier of boxes immediately left the house. But time works wondrous changes, and though for a while Turkish trousers were adopted by the lady, they were finally discarded and the common ballet dresses, indecent though they be, were gradually endured.

When one considers the tyranny which "female delicacy" exercised at this time, it is remarkable that actresses were tolerated at all, or that once tolerated, they were subjected to no worse infliction than pantalettes. Perhaps the traditions of the theatre had a vitality strong enough to resist what — in its extreme form — was only a temporary aberration. Possibly those who went to the theatre thought they might as well be hanged for a sheep (perhaps not too big a sheep) as a lamb, and that a little more or less hardly mattered. But this is speculation.

The stage was not then, and probably never has been, a sure or easy road to even moderate success, and for a few years after the Revolution the obstacles were greater than they had been, say, in 1770; but after the turn of the century the way became somewhat smoother, and actress and actor advanced side by side.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Inky-Fingered Sisterhood*

Women have often found a kinder welcome in the realm of letters than in most fields of intellectual activity. The colonial period, naturally enough, produced only a few writers of either sex, but among them women made a creditable showing. In fact, Anne Bradstreet's poetry and Mary Rowlandson's account of her captivity by the Indians, each of which happened to be the earliest in its class, was each also probably the best.

Incentives to writing grew stronger after the mid-eighteenth century, and still more after the Revolution. Printing increased enormously in bulk between 1776 and 1840; newspapers, books, magazines, began to appear in relative profusion. Moreover, people became interested in a greater variety of reading matter. In most of the new opportunities thus created, women shared fully.

Only two or three plays had been written in colonial America, and none so far as known by women. During the Revolutionary period Mercy Warren — already celebrated as a writer of verse and of charming letters — composed at least two satirical dramas. They were intended as propaganda, for reading rather than acting, and from any point of view they were dull. When the theatre was reestablished after the War, American-made plays became numerous, although some years were to pass before they became (or deserved to be) popular. Dunlap, writing in 1835, listed eleven women dramatists, several of whom had had plays produced. Those by Mrs. Rowson, already referred to, were as good as any, but that is not high praise.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Warren was more successful with the work formidably called *A History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, Interspersed with Biographical, Political, and Moral Reflections*. Dr. Bentley noted in his diary a visit to General and Mrs. Warren at their home in Plymouth in 1806, and commented on the recently published history:

Mrs. Warren will be able to supply many facts and has taken great pains to preserve such anecdotes as have been furnished from her extensive acquaintance with men and events in the revolution. — Madame Warren is nearly eighty years of age. With all the passions of a female she has embraced the Republican principles and tho susceptible to flattery yet she cannot refuse to sacrifice it to the patriotism which she fondly loves.

Allowing for the difference in the times, Bentley's opinion of Mrs. Warren's *chef d'oeuvre* seems to have been much like that of Moses Coit Tyler, who wrote that he rather enjoyed "the naiveté, the verve, the piquant flavor of this heroic vindictiveness."<sup>2</sup>

A more important historian was Hannah Adams, born in Medfield, Massachusetts, in 1755.<sup>3</sup> As a young woman she supported herself by lace-making, but when the economic disturbances which followed the Revolutionary War destroyed her market, she turned to tutoring. She had learned Latin and Greek in childhood from theological students who boarded with her father, and she soon became known for her success in preparing boys for Harvard. Meanwhile she started to write. *A View of Religious Opinion*, first published in 1784, established her reputation; it went through several editions and was reprinted in England. *A History of New England* appeared in 1799, and her most important work, *A History of the Jews*, in 1812. These and other books sold well, but she wrote slowly and she was no business woman. Finances were a continual worry and she is said to have eked out her income at times by braiding straw. She was saved from distress in old age by the action of some public-spirited

Boston women who persuaded their husbands to raise money to buy her an annuity.

Anne Royall, who called Miss Adams the "glory of New England females," described her in 1826:<sup>4</sup>

She is about seventy years of age, of low stature, and slightly inclined to corpulency; she is declining in health, though very cheerful, and walks a good deal in fine weather: her hair is perfectly white, her complexion is fair, her face round, her features regular and very delicate, her eyes a dark hazel (what may be called black) very small, but soft and intelligent; her teeth are decayed, and disfigure her very much; she lisps in speaking, but has a sweet melodious voice. Her countenance is animated, and the most pleasing I ever witnessed in a person of her age, her face being lighted up with a smile. But the leading trait in her countenance is *innocence*. — Her manners are easy and natural without one spark of pride or affectation.

Hannah Adams, although unmarried, was often called by the old courtesy title of *Mrs.* She was the first American woman to make a profession of scholarship and probably the first to earn a living — however precarious — by writing. She was the first woman allowed to use the Boston Atheneum; a portrait of her, painted by Chester Harding and paid for by popular subscription, still graces its walls. It is appropriately placed there, for without facilities such as the Atheneum afforded, work like hers would have been impossible.

Few women of her time had access to a library like the Atheneum, and probably not many would have had the urge to use it as Hannah Adams did. No research was needed, however, to write the verses, the little essays, and the meditations, to which newspapers and the increasing number of magazines gave a ready welcome.

Magazines have had such an important influence on American letters that it is worth reviewing their development.<sup>5</sup> The two earliest made their debut in 1741; fifteen others appeared before 1776, with seventy-nine more by 1800. But these were mostly blossoms of a single summer. Only one of

the pre-revolutionary ventures reached its third birthday, and the record for survival up to 1800 was only eight years.

After 1800, however, the climate grew more genial. Infant deaths were still frequent, but some youngsters showed more hardihood. By 1840 the reader could choose from no less than seventeen magazines, seven of which were already at least fifteen years old. All of these seven, moreover, and some of the later comers, had years of life and reasonable prosperity ahead. America had become a magazine-reading nation.

These magazines served as vehicles for introducing the great writers as well as many small ones to a wide public, and several, moreover, paid decent fees to their contributors. The effect of this development need not be labored. To the urge for self-expression and the desire to influence and impress one's neighbors, (for even manuscripts can be passed around) were added the opportunity both for far wider recognition and for financial reward.

There seems to have been little if any prejudice against contributions by women, and before long the importance of women as potential readers was recognized. Magazines sprang up especially for "the fair sex," some of them with women editors. Outstanding among them was Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, who began her long and interesting career as editor with *The Ladies Magazine* in 1828 in Boston. Nine years later this was combined with *Godey's Ladies' Book*, with Mrs. Hale in charge.<sup>6</sup>

A modern reader who thumbs over these old magazines may regret that writing received quite so much encouragement. Apparently a few editors of the time had some scruples, and not quite everyone who longed to appear in print was gratified. The *Boston Magazine* for October 26, 1805, carried a sharp warning:

#### To Readers and Correspondents.

Rolla will in our opinion succeed much better in any other employment than that of attempting to write poetry. Our poetical department must be filled with selections, unless we can procure original poetry that is *genuine*.

Most editors, however, were more complacent. The editor of *The Balance* for November 30, 1802, thanked Julianne for sending some sonnets; the one on Humility, however, had not been received, and that on Hygeia had been misplaced — could she furnish copies?

The use of a *nom de plume* was common but if initial offerings were well received, the author usually stepped forth from her anonymity before long and published a little volume of collected poems, "at the request of her friends." Frequently the friends were called on for introductory epistles and recommendations. The advertisement of Mrs. Allen's *Miscellaneous Poems*, to be printed by subscription, which appeared in the *National Intelligencer* for July 15, 1804, concluded with a letter to the author from a Dr. Hall, who wrote of the manuscript:

In my opinion it is a work of considerable merit, and displays true piety and poetic genius. The pastoral dialogues are commendable for their novelty, simplicity, and beauty. The elegies, epistles, and especially "The Man of Misfortune, a Moral Tale," are interesting and pathetic. The Odes and Fugitive Pieces are sprightly and amusing — and the whole composition seems to breathe such a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence as cannot fail to elevate the affections and mend the heart. And it is to be regretted that the author's modesty has hitherto denied the community so refined and elegant an entertainment.

The public of 1804 liked its poetic genius well mixed with piety and refinement. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Mrs. Allen's muse won wide recognition.

The queen of Parnassus throughout most of our period was Sarah Wentworth Morton of Boston and Braintree, Massachusetts.<sup>7</sup> She had every gift of fortune, — wealth, a happy home life, social position, and charm, and Gilbert Stuart's lovely portraits bear testimony to her beauty. The modern reader, however, will find little enjoyment in her once popular poems. Even in her own day criticism was not wanting. The Salem diarist, Dr. Bentley, wrote on November 22, 1797:

The talk now is about Mrs. Morton's Poem, *Beacon Hill*, and it is said to exceed any poetic composition from a female pen. She is called the American Sappho. Mr. Paine calls her so. Beside Mrs. Stearns is soon to publish *The Ladies' Philosophy of Love*, which they have begun to praise before they have seen it. These poems are reduced to no class. American genius refuses restraint. Posterity will wonder at the present age when they find what we admire.

Hannah Flagg Gould of Newburyport, Massachusetts, did not aim as high as Mrs. Morton, but her verses give more pleasure today; the best are nature poems for children. She spent an uneventful life in keeping house for her father and brothers, and she was known among her neighbors for her piety and wit. Both these qualities — not always on speaking terms — appear in her verse.<sup>8</sup>

Maria Gowan Brooks, "Maria del Occidente," perhaps most nearly deserves remembrance as a genuine poet. Born and brought up in Boston, she lived some years in Portland, Maine, and after her husband's death she traveled extensively. Her life offered plenty of contrasts. There were tales of importunate lovers, of attempted suicide, of a Grecian temple in Cuba, of Oriental studies in Paris, and the more placid joy of being welcomed as a fellow spirit by the English Lake poets. Southeby indeed pronounced her "the most impassioned and the most imaginative of *all* poetesses." Nevertheless she was not generally admired in her own country, although several American critics (including the author of *The Flowering of New England*) claim that she showed more of the divine spark than most or perhaps any other American of her day except Poe.<sup>9</sup>

Although the ladies so far mentioned and many like them enjoyed considerable prestige, they were not really professional writers. They came from well-to-do families, who gave them such intellectual opportunities as the time afforded. They expressed themselves and won the admiration of their friends by their poetry just as their sisters did by beautiful embroidery or superfine pie-crust. There was no sex peculiar-

ity about this, however; the time had not yet come when poetry was regarded as anything more than an elegant diversion.

Yet the most popular "poetess" of the second quarter of the nineteenth century was emphatically a professional. Lydia Huntley was born in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1791, in what was later described as "the humblest penury."<sup>16</sup> Energetic friends helped her to get an education, to set up a school, and in 1811 not only to publish a volume called *Moral Pieces, in Prose and Verse*, but actually to sell a thousand copies at one dollar apiece. She was a successful teacher, but both teaching and publishing were relinquished on her marriage in 1820 to Charles Sigourney. The middle-aged widower entertained old-fashioned ideas about female modesty; *Miss Huntley* might be forgiven for appearing in print, but *Mrs. Sigourney* was debarred. For several years, therefore, she struggled to keep her muse within the limits set by religious and patriotic occasions and an occasional anonymous volume. By 1833, however, Mr. Sigourney's financial situation became so unsatisfactory that the muse snapped these bonds. During the next two years nine volumes appeared — *Evening Readings in History, How to Be Happy, Letters to Young Ladies, Poems, Poetry for Children*, and so forth.

These titles indicate the nature of the flood which followed. Within five or six years Mrs. Sigourney was receiving enough money from her writings to feel prosperous. She exactly hit the taste of her day, and was the most sought-after magazine writer in the country. Godey paid her \$500 a year for several years for the mere use of her name as an editor, and this was not even an exclusive use. Since financial stringency had led to her becoming a professional writer, she bargained shrewdly to get the largest possible financial return. If modern methods had been in vogue then, her little essays on married happiness and so forth would have been syndicated and printed in every newspaper. In fact she came remarkably close to that ideal.

Yet it would be a mistake to think of Mrs. Sigourney merely as a writer for the pulps. To be called "the American Hemans" may not seem exciting praise now, but it was in 1835. Poe criticized her works, yet he invited her to contribute to a special number of *The Southern Literary Messenger* (of which he was editor) to consist "entirely of articles from our most distinguished *literati*," and he gave the poem she sent the place of honor. In 1849 her collected poems were brought out in an expensive edition uniform with Longfellow's and Bryant's.

Mrs. Sigourney lived until the end of the Civil War, but her popularity had been waning for some years. The modern reader finds her works intolerably dull and is amazed that they could ever have been enjoyed. The reasons, in brief, seem to be that she was always sweet, helpful, comforting — according to the taste which loved to hear about death — and usually tuneful; and she was a "poor girl who became famous." She had even been received by King Louis Phillippe and Queen Amelie — a visit celebrated in blank verse in the course of which she praised the queen for pulling her sleeves well down over her wrists, since the room was chilly. Although Mrs. Sigourney was a shade too glad to talk about such dazzling experiences, it is only just to add that she was very generous. She gave away every year at least one tenth of her income, and insensitive as she was in advertising her literary exploits, she was unostentatious and thoughtful in kind deeds.

Fiction was practically non-existent in the colonial period: the first American novel appeared in 1774. Women were not slow in entering this field. Mrs. Morton wrote the second American novel — *The Power of Sympathy, or the Triumph of Nature, Founded on Truth*, — which appeared in 1789. Of eighty-three American writers known to have published works of fiction before 1830, twenty-six were women.<sup>11</sup>

The best-seller of the day, *Charlotte Temple, a Tale of Truth*, which appeared in Philadelphia in 1794, was by Susannah Rowson. It had actually been written in England,

where it was published in 1790; but as the scene is laid on both sides of the Atlantic, and as Mrs. Rowson spent most of her life in the United States, it is counted as part of American literature.<sup>12</sup>

Mrs. Rowson has already appeared in these pages.<sup>13</sup> She was born in 1762 in Portsmouth, England, the daughter of William Haswell, a British naval officer. When she was five years old her father was assigned to duty at Hull, Massachusetts, and there the family lived for nine years. Soon after their return to England, Susannah became governess to the children of the famous Duchess of Devonshire. Her first novel, *Victoria*, dedicated to the Duchess, appeared in 1786. In the same year she married William Rowson, and the young couple went on the stage. Their fortunes there, and the boarding school in Boston, have been noted in earlier chapters.

Mrs. Rowson was a prolific writer — of text books, novels, poems, and essays — and for three years she was editor of *The Boston Weekly Magazine*. Her other novels achieved no striking success, but *Charlotte Temple* continued in such popularity that it had gone through at least one hundred and sixty editions by 1905. Some of her poetry was included in most of the anthologies of the time, although one editor lamented that "it bore no marks of feminine genius." The present writer, rather suffocated with the "feminine genius" in which most poetesses of the day wallowed, liked it all the better, perhaps. A stanza from a typical patriotic effusion may be quoted:

Then under snug sail we laugh at the gale,  
And though landsmen look pale, never heed 'em;  
But toss off a glass to a favorite lass,  
To America, commerce, and freedom.

Not quite what one expects from an ultra-proper school mistress, nor from the author of *Charlotte Temple*, which indeed reeks of "feminine genius."

Mrs. Rowson is practically forgotten today, but she did not lack appreciation in her own time. The love with which

she inspired her pupils has already been noted. She seems to have been generous and attractive as well as gifted; with no children of her own, she brought up at least four relatives or adopted children. She was president of the Boston Fatherless and Widows Society, and was active in many other philanthropies. The exhibitions of her school were social events of the first interest. She was regarded as one of the leading literary figures of the time, and *Charlotte Temple* was the best selling American novel before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

One cannot appreciate *Charlotte Temple* at its full worth without reading other American novels of the period. Its nearest rival in popularity was *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster.<sup>14</sup> Both stories present the well-worn theme of the innocent girl of worthy parents who, in the words of Goldsmith, "stoops to folly." According to the American formula, parents and friends are less hard-hearted than the poet and are ready to forgive her and welcome her back; but in both cases the difficulty of finishing the story with a proper moral is avoided by the heroine's accepting Goldsmith's hint, and dying. *The Coquette* received considerable advertising from the fact that the heroine was identified with the central figure of a local *cause celebre*. Yet even this fact hardly explains thirty editions before 1834.

Mrs. Foster was the wife of the Unitarian clergyman in Brighton, Massachusetts, and was active in church and community affairs. A modern admirer has hailed her as the day star of the woman's rights movement, largely on the basis of the following passage in *The Coquette*:

[Mrs. Lawrence] replied, that she never meddled with politics; she thought they did not belong to ladies. Miss Wharton and I, said Mrs. Richman, must beg leave to differ with you, madam. We think ourselves interested in the welfare and prosperity of our country; and consequently, claim the right of inquiring into those affairs, which may conduce to, or interfere with, the common weal. — If the community flourish and enjoy health and freedom, shall we not share in the happy effects? If it be oppressed and disturbed shall we not endure our proportion of the evil? Why then should

the love of country be a masculine passion only? — The gentlemen applauded Mrs. Richman's sentiments, as truly Roman; and what was more, they said, truly republican.

This argument, however sound, may strike the reader as somewhat heavy for inclusion in correspondence — the form in which the whole story is told. The present writer, who plowed through the dreary tale to its end, is tempted to say that these were the only sensible words in it. Certainly the following, from the heroine's overdue letter to her mother, is more typical:

From the conversation of the polite, the sedate, the engaging, and the gay; from corresponding with the learned, the sentimental, and the refined, my heart and my pen turn with ardor and alacrity to a tender and affectionate parent, the faithful guardian and guide of my youth; the unchanging friend of my riper years.

In comparison, *Charlotte Temple* is written in a simple and sincere style, and although full of piety and tears the story is made to seem plausible and is peopled with credible characters.

The early years of our national existence failed to produce any notable fiction, but a change occurred around 1820. *The Sketch Book* had begun to come out the previous year; *The Spy*, Cooper's second novel but the first to attract attention, was printed in 1821; and in 1822 came *A New England Tale*, by Catherine Maria Sedgwick.

Miss Sedgwick, a member of the distinguished Massachusetts family and daughter of a United States senator, had already attained success as a teacher, but the praise with which the *Tale* was greeted turned her to literature.<sup>15</sup> *Redwood* (1824), soon published in England, and later translated into French and Italian, *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in America* (1827), *The Linwoods, or Sixty Years Since in America* (1830), and their successors all exploited local scenes and history. They are written in a pleasant, unaffected style, and although the moral is somewhat too explicit for modern taste, they are still interesting. Beside novels, she wrote a

number of short stories (which Miss Martineau considered much superior to the novels) and several books for children. Her life was uneventful. Anne Royall has described her appearance thus:

She is of good stature and fine figure; she is of spare make, with oval face and thin visage; her complexion wan, with a grey eye, her features well-proportioned, her countenance rather austere.

Her letters give an impression of greater animation — of a warm, lovable personality, the center of a devoted and interesting circle of friends and relatives.

An increasing number of women followed in Miss Sedgwick's wake, although none quite reached her standard of sustained excellence. Lydia Maria (Francis) Child was one of the most successful,<sup>16</sup> and she is credited with being the author of the first novel dealing with the history of New England — *Hobomok*, which appeared in 1824. She wrote a classical novel, biographies of Madame de Staél and Madame Roland, several books such as *The Family Nurse* and *The Frugal Housewife* (which had its thirty-third edition in 1865), *The Progress of Religious Ideas*, and *Letters from New York* — valuable as a historical source-book — and she edited the first monthly magazine for children.

Mrs. Child is best remembered today for her work as an abolitionist, — work which seriously jeopardized her contemporary popularity. Her *Appeal for the Class of Americans Called Africans*, which appeared in 1833, is regarded as the first important anti-slavery book. At once her name became anathema to the respectable, and the sale of her other books almost stopped. But she was not to be intimidated. She accepted the editorship of *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1840, and thereafter devoted major attention to the cause.

Emancipation was not the only unpopular subject which Mrs. Child espoused. She took up the protection of unfortunate women with a zeal regarded as very indelicate, and she worked for peace, temperance, educational and prison reform, and equal rights for women. Her good judgment

and attractive personality gave her great influence among all who knew her personally and gradually won back the wider public which her heretical views had alienated. She holds a high place among reformers of the time.

Every student of women's activities in colonial days is impressed by the number of women printers. Eleven such were presented in *Colonial Women of Affairs*; most of them were also newspaper publishers and editors, and several were outstandingly successful.<sup>17</sup>

The earliest known woman editor was Mrs. Elizabeth Timothy of Charleston. Upon her husband's sudden death in 1738, she carried on *The South Carolina Gazette* until her son Peter was grown up. Peter was lost at sea during the Revolution. The Timothys were Patriots, and their paper had to be discontinued during the British occupation of Charleston, but in 1782 Peter's widow Ann revived it. She was appointed state printer also, and so remained until her death in 1792. According to Isaiah Thomas, the historian of early American printing, she brought out the *Gazette* regularly every Monday and Thursday for ten years.<sup>18</sup>

Apparently her estate was not in good condition, and her sons did not think highly of her achievements as an editor. In the *Gazette* of September 20, 1792, they announced:

The representatives of the late Mrs. Ann Timothy take this mode of making their acknowledgements to their friends and the public, for the patronage and encouragement shown by them to their late mother, and soliciting on their own behalf a continuance of their favour. . . . The business of the printing office will still be carried on in its various branches, and as they are sensible the *Gazette* as hitherto published, stood in great need of improvement, every exertion shall be used to render it more useful and acceptable to the subscribers and to effect a more extensive circulation of it.

Then followed increasingly tart requests that debtors would pay their bills.

Mrs. Timothy had associates of her own sex in Charleston. In 1778 Widow Mary Crouch revived *The Charleston Gazette*

which her husband Charles had published (under a slightly different name) until his death in 1775; but as the capture of the city by the British became imminent, Mrs. Crouch packed her press and types and took ship for Salem.<sup>19</sup> Her career there is noted later. In 1783, after the British had withdrawn, a Mrs. Elizabeth Boden ran a printing establishment there for a year or so.<sup>20</sup>

A woman in Washington, Georgia, was more fortunate than most printers. Sarah Porter, born in 1763 in Hadley, Massachusetts, had married David Hillhouse in 1781. Because of some unexplained misfortune, the young couple moved a few years later to what were then the wilds of Georgia. There David set up as a planter and general store-keeper, and in 1801 as publisher and editor of *The Monitor*. Upon his death only two years later, his widow took over his varied affairs and handled them capably. For a time, the Journal of the Georgia House of Representatives was printed in her shop, and a local historian calls her the first state printer as well as the first woman editor of Georgia.

Mrs. Hillhouse became a leading citizen in the district. Her children received the best education of the time — the son graduating from Yale and her two daughters from the Moravian Seminary at Bethlehem. When she turned *The Monitor* over to her son, in 1810 or '11, she was able to give him \$10,000, and she left the same sum to each of her daughters. The family genealogist believes that the chief part of her income came from the publishing business, but in view of the financial troubles of most publishers one cannot accept this assumption without proof. So few copies of *The Monitor* have survived that it is difficult to assess Mrs. Hillhouse's journalistic ability, but some letters which have been printed display a lively and incisive style and considerable humor. She died in 1831, her memory cherished by the community as well as by her descendants.<sup>21</sup>

Mary Katherine Goddard of Baltimore came from a family of printers. Her brother William had founded a newspaper in Providence, Rhode Island, which his mother Sarah Updike

Goddard continued very capably when affairs called him elsewhere. In 1773 William started *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, but within a few months he became so much occupied with plans for improving the federal postal system that he left the paper to the management of his sister. After acting as his substitute for a year, she let her own name appear alone as publisher and editor. So it remained until William was ready to return in 1784, when Mary gracefully withdrew in his favor. The paper had been prosperous during her editorship, with as wide a circulation as any on the continent. Isaiah Thomas described her as an expert and correct compositor; and she did some very good book printing, including fine work with copper plate.

Mary Goddard's activity was not limited to printing and publishing. She ran a book and stationery shop, owned and perhaps managed a paper mill, and for fourteen years held the position of postmistress. In 1789 she was superseded by a man who was to act as district chief and travel over an extensive territory. In an unsuccessful petition which she sent to President Washington, appealing against this decision, she showed the small returns which she had received from her position, in spite of increasing business, and she stated that she had often been obliged to pay the post-riders "hard money" out of her own purse. She continued her bookshop until 1802. She died in 1816, leaving a small property to a colored servant.<sup>22</sup>

Apparently a good many women were postmistresses, and Miss Goddard was not the only one who combined the duties with publishing and printing. *Niles Register* for April 25, 1829, noted:

Mrs. Mary Dickson, the proprietor of the *Lancaster Intelligencer*, has been charged with the superintendence of the post office of Lancaster city, in the room of Mrs. Ann Moore, resigned.

According to the Centennial Number of the *Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Intelligencer*, published March 9, 1895, William Dickson was one of the founders, and for some years

editor, of that paper. In the issue of January 9, 1823, his wife announced that he was dangerously ill, and that she would try to bring out the paper on time but

Should the paper not appear next week the subscribers will readily account for it. We hope that no such irregularity will occur; should it, however, under the Providence of an all-wise God, be so, we call on our friends not to forsake the Widow and the Orphans. We hope to be able to carry on the paper with their assistance.

The illness proved fatal, and on February 23, the *Intelligencer* appeared under the heading

Printed and published for Mary Dickson, successor of William Dickson, by Gunning Bedford.

Bedford, who was Mrs. Dickson's son-in-law, died the following year. For two years after that Mrs. Dickson edited the paper herself, and according to the *Centennial Number*, she did it very well.<sup>23</sup> At the same time she advertised books and garden seed for sale. She evidently kept on with the shop after she had secured another editor for the paper — of which she remained proprietor — for Anne Royall wrote of her on October 31, 1828:

I took a walk to see my book seller, Mrs. Dickson, another amiable female, as mild as a May morning. She is a widow. I hope she may meet with liberal patronage from the citizens of Lancaster for two reasons: first, because she is a widow and is without the means of support; and second, because she is a worthy, plain, sensible, kind, and honest woman, and has a large family. Showing me her children, she told me, with a sigh, that her patronage was small; that she scarcely sold books enough to clear the cost; that literature had few supporters in Lancaster.

Philadelphia had several women printers. Mrs. Elizabeth Oswald continued her husband's paper, *The Independent Gazetteer*, for a year after his death in 1795.<sup>24</sup> She had already had experience; she was the daughter of the New York printers, John and Elizabeth Holt, mentioned below, and she had acted in her husband's stead during his absence on a prolonged trip to Europe a few years earlier. In *German*

*Printing in America, 1728-1830*, a Mrs. Cist is listed, "Carl Cist's Wittwe," who published books for some years after her husband's death in 1805.<sup>25</sup>

William McCulloch, who added notes to Thomas's *History of Printing*, gives a confused account of some women named Humphreys who assisted their father Daniel Humphreys in his printing business. The father began as a printer in 1775, had a finger in several newspapers, and still ran a printing house in Philadelphia in 1812. McCulloch wrote:

One or two of Daniel Humphrey's [sic] daughters are said to have been tolerably smart and ready compositors, and would sometimes for their amusement work in the office. I frequently heard of this circumstance when I was a boy; and thought it rather marvelous. I was witness, sometime since, in visiting a printing office near the city, to see two women working at case, with seeming expedition.

Later McCulloch added, à propos of the Humphreys sisters,

I am since told that these women can do a week's work with almost any of the men; and that one of them (now the widow of the late Abel Dickerson) finds it to her advantage to hire a woman in the household affairs and betake herself to the office.

And in another letter he wrote:

Daniel Humphrey's daughters were and are *amiable*. I believe that fact certain. The other woman I mentioned was the widow of Dickinson [sic] and her, (I believe) sister.

Since Thomas had noted the careers and extolled the virtues of several women printers, it is not clear why the skill and especially the amiability of the Humphreys sisters should be cause for astonishment.<sup>26</sup>

Jane Aitken of Philadelphia also was favorably mentioned by McCulloch.<sup>27</sup> Her father Robert (printer of the first American edition of the Bible) died in debt, in 1802. As his son proved incompetent, Jane was allowed to take his stock on her promising to satisfy the creditors, and according to Thomas she gained a reputation for excellent work. McCulloch, writing in 1812, stated that she had paid off all

the debts and acquired some property, and called her "praise-worthy and attentive." Hard times were just ahead, however, for two years later McCulloch informed Thomas:

Since I wrote you before, Jane Aitken has failed. Her types and everything else were seized or clandestinely conveyed; but either through the assistance of friends, or an evasion in assignment, her implements of trade were restored and she still continued the business, since which she failed again, and sponged her debts in Norristown jail, twenty miles from Philadelphia. But she now prosecutes her business once more.

Lydia R. Bailey, also of Philadelphia, was more fortunate.<sup>28</sup> Her husband Robert Bailey died in 1808, leaving to his young widow nothing but debts and the care of four small children. But she had learned his trade and did not hesitate to carry on his printing business. In 1809 Philip Freneau allowed her to publish his *Poems*. Her father-in-law, also a printer, turned some business to her, and retired in her favor in 1815. She did good work and she prospered. From 1830 to 1850 she was printer to the city of Philadelphia. During the later part of her life she had the aid of a son, and after his death in 1861 she retired, but she was then over eighty years old. She died in 1869, and was buried in the churchyard of the Third Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, to the endowment of which she had been the first contributor.

Several widows carried on New York newspapers for a year or two after the death of their husbands. Elizabeth Hunter Holt and her husband were natives of Williamsburg, Virginia, but following a financial reverse, John Holt went north in 1754, where he soon found occupation as a printer and publisher. When he died in 1784, Mrs. Holt continued *The Independent Gazette or the New York Journal*, and was appointed to the position he had held as state printer. She came of a family of printers, and the tradition was continued; her daughter, Mrs. Oswald, has been noted, and a son carried on a paper in Norfolk, Virginia. All the Holt connection were ardent Patriots.<sup>29</sup>

When Thomas Greenleaf, editor of the *New York Argus*, died of yellow fever in 1798, his widow Ann fell heir to some acrimonious disputes connected with the paper which made her position hazardous; soon afterward her foreman was imprisoned for several months on the charge of libel. It is not strange that she sold the business in 1800.<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Margaret Harrisson seems to have had better fortune; she continued to publish her late husband's paper, the *New York Weekly Museum*, for about four years, from 1804 to 1808.<sup>31</sup>

The women of New England hardly made as good a showing in the printing business as those of the Middle States. The Mrs. Crouch who left Charleston at the approach of the British and went to Salem was one of the most interesting of them. For several years during the Revolution, no newspaper had been printed in Salem, and that fact may have decided her to go there. At any rate, on December 6, 1780, "Mary Crouch and Company" announced the forthcoming appearance of *The Salem Gazette and General Advertiser*, with the promise that it would publish news which should concern "the safety and welfare of the United States, to the Liberties and Independence of which the Salem Gazette will be ever sacredly devoted." Beside issuing the newspaper, Mrs. Crouch would sell stationers' goods, and "a few New England Primers printed in a Beautiful New Type."

The first number of the *Gazette* appeared on January 2, 1781. It was a weekly, the subscription price a half dollar the quarter. It was attractively printed and was unusually readable. Mrs. Crouch apologized for the lack of news during the winter months, when it was difficult to maintain correspondence; she hoped to collect foreign intelligence in the spring. Times were hard in 1781, however, and in spite of the foreign correspondence and other attractions, Mrs. Crouch was not able to finish out the year. The specific reasons for her decision to give up, announced on September 4, have a painfully familiar ring to modern ears — "the want of sufficient Assistance and the impossibility of procuring House-Room for herself and Family to reside near her Business." After

selling her stock, Mrs. Crouch went to Providence, her birth-place, and later she returned to Charleston where a son lived. She died there in 1818, nearly eighty years old.<sup>32</sup>

Mrs. Sarah Russell was another woman of parts, and she did not wait until her husband's death to use them. Ezekiel Russell had an erratic career as printer and publisher in half a dozen New England towns. According to Isaiah Thomas, who had worked in his shop as a boy, he did not succeed with either books or newspapers, but finally obtained "a very decent support" by printing ballads and small pamphlets for pedlars. Mrs. Russell, Thomas continued,

was indeed an "help meet" for him. She was a very industrious, active woman; she made herself acquainted with the printing business; and, she not only assisted her husband in the printing house, but she sometimes invoked her muse, and wrote ballads on recent tragical events, which being immediately printed and set off with wooden cuts of coffins, etc., had frequently a considerable run.

Russell died in 1796, and his widow continued the business for some time. Mrs. Hanaford is authority for the statement that Mrs. Russell used to set her own type and put together editorial leaders direct, without first writing them on paper. Perhaps it was the ballads ("dreadful ballads," according to Thomas's biographer,) which were so composed.<sup>33</sup>

In Newport, Rhode Island, where Ann Franklin had been a notable figure in colonial days, Ann Barber succeeded her husband as publisher of *The Newport Mercury*, (the same paper which Mrs. Franklin's son had founded and which she had continued,) from 1800 to 1809.<sup>34</sup> It is not certain that Mrs. Barber took personal charge. In Hartford, Hannah Watson carried on her late husband's paper, *The Connecticut Courant*, after his death in 1777. Upon her marriage in 1779 to Barzilai Hudson, she took him into the firm, — although according to Thomas, he was not "bred a printer", — but she continued to be an active partner.<sup>35</sup>

Naturally, the cities along the Atlantic seaboard produced the earliest newspapers, but the states further west were not

slow in following suit. Tennessee had several before the end of the eighteenth century. One of the most important of these was the *Knoxville Gazette*, published by George Roulstone until his death in 1804. It was then carried on by his widow Elizabeth; she was twice elected state printer, and the laws of 1806 bear her name.<sup>36</sup>

A printer of either sex needed plenty of courage. Financial returns were meagre, and prisons still yawned for an unfortunate bankrupt, as witness Jane Aitken. Political and personal hazards, too, were considerable. The situation seems to have been especially acute in New Orleans. In an article on "The French Newspapers of Louisiana", Edward L. Tinker presents a lively picture of the risks;<sup>37</sup> the date appears to be about 1830.

The tradition inaugurated by these fire-eating journalists, of editing newspapers with the point of the sword rather than with that of the pen, survived for many years; . . . These conditions made it difficult for women to own papers; but one enterprising widow, . . . who had inherited a weekly, solved the problem by printing this manifesto on her front page:

We take pleasure in announcing to our readers that Mr. John Smith, able writer and zealous American, has been engaged to conduct the political discussion in our newspaper during the coming election. Although Mr. Smith has a charming character and is most courteous, he has already fought five duels and killed his man each time. He puts at the service of our editorial department, independently of a mass of excellent political arguments, two long swords, a Parson gun, two revolvers, and a remarkable collection of sword canes, not to mention two calves of steel. We bespeak for him a cordial welcome into the corps of political writers.

No one can doubt that the cordial welcome was forthcoming.

If the swords, guns, and revolvers may be understood in a figurative sense, one woman journalist had no need of any man's help: Anne Royall could handle them all herself. Her ten volumes of travel are frequently quoted in these pages. In addition, she published and edited a newspaper for twenty-

three years. From many points of view she was the most significant woman journalist of her time.<sup>38</sup>

Alone among the women writers here noted, Anne Newport Royall was the product of the frontier — in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. She had little or no formal schooling, but before his early death her father had taught her to read and to love books, and her education was continued by William Royall, the wealthy eccentric for whom her mother worked and whom Anne married in 1797. In spite of a great difference in age, the marriage turned out happily, and at his death in 1813, Royall left her most of his property. But a nephew contested the will, and after ten years' litigation succeeded in having it set aside.

Mrs. Royall, who had been travelling with a retinue like a woman of wealth, was in Alabama when she learned that she had lost her suit and was practically penniless. She decided to go to Washington and apply for a pension on the ground of her husband's Revolutionary services. In order to divert her mind on the long journey, she started making notes about everything of interest which she saw, and the idea came to her that she could work these notes into a book. In Washington she enlisted the aid of John Quincy Adams to forward her claim to a pension — an undertaking in which he persevered for years, but without success.

*Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States; by a Traveller*, appeared in New Haven in 1826. The next year came an unsuccessful novel, *The Tennessean*, and from 1827 to 1831 nine more volumes of travels. To get the material for them she journeyed up and down the country, visiting every town and almost every village. Anyone who knows what travelling in those days meant must be filled with admiration for her courage. Wherever she stopped, she learned everything possible of the local history, the industries, schools, institutions of all kinds, prominent people, and other points of interest. At the same time she solicited subscriptions for her books.

Mrs. Royall's pathway would have been easier if she had

been content with presenting a photographic record of what she saw, but the modern reader might find her less interesting. Her facts were as accurate as she could make them, but in expressing opinions about people and movements she let her prejudices have full sway. She was warm, even effusive, in praise of kindness, but when she suspected hypocrisy or intolerance she swung her flail with vigor, and she never hesitated to join a fight.

A fierce battle was raging at the moment over Free-masonry, and Mrs. Royall, whose husband had been a Mason, plunged into it with ardor. In consequence she became little less than a saint to the Masons, and a devil to the Anti-masonic hosts. She was not conciliatory. When in 1830 a Cincinnati clergyman charged her with "injuring the cause of morals, not to say of religion" she replied:

I . . . pay no more respect to people who boast of their "labors," "glorious harvest," etc., etc., etc., than I would to a female who would boast of her virtue, or a man who would boast of his honesty. I would rather see one good action (and I presume God would too) than hear ten thousand good words. . . . I do not read the Bible and I will tell you why. I was raised, as I said, among the heathen, where I learned nothing but virtue and independence. When introduced among civilized people the Bible was put into my hands. But before I looked into it I watched the conduct of those who read it, and I found they committed murder, they robbed, they got drunk, they betrayed their friends and were guilty of all kinds of abominations, and I was afraid to read the Bible lest I might do so too.

Mrs. Royall's violence is understandable. She was still limping from a fall which she had in Burlington, Vermont, three years earlier; a pious Anti-mason, whose store she had entered merely to solicit a subscription for her book, had knocked her down a long flight of steps with such force that her leg was broken.

This was the hasty act of a single individual, but an attack which occurred in Washington in 1829 was deliberate. Because her books were being widely read and were provoking

the irreverent to laughter, two ministers and some federal employees decided to silence her. On their complaint she was arrested, charged with being a public nuisance, a common brawler, and a common scold. It was difficult to find a law which would apply; no one had been tried for years as a scold, and the judge balked at the idea of ducking an old woman over sixty. But a suitable statute was unearthed. The first two charges were dismissed, but twelve witnesses were called to prove that she was a scold. Most of the evidence came from members of a small congregation which worshipped near her rooms, and which had tried to convert her by the minister's praying loudly under her window and boys howling and throwing stones at it. The evidence was farcical, but nevertheless the jury brought in a verdict of guilty: Mrs. Royall was fined \$10 and obliged to furnish a bond to keep the peace for one year. Friends, among whom were two members of the Cabinet, hastened to offer the needed security.

Although Mrs. Royall made fun of the proceedings, she was deeply hurt by the verdict, which of course was played up by her critics. *Niles Register* for August 8, 1829, reported it with a sneering reference to

this female [who had] obtained considerable notoriety in the United States as a travelling merchantess for the sale of her own "home made books."

Two years later Niles quoted an item from the *Journal of Camden*, South Carolina:

*Dreadful literary calamity.*

A whole bundle of Mrs. Royall's southern tour intended for her subscribers in this town, was burnt in the Lafayette hotel, in the late distressing fire at Fayetteville. We have heard of nothing like it since the destruction of the Alexandrian library.

The southern tour referred to was Mrs. Royall's last. Travelling was becoming too hard for her, and she decided to publish a newspaper in Washington instead. She bought a second-hand press, hired a printer, took two boys from the Catholic orphan asylum, and launched her paper, *Paul Pry*,

in December, 1831. The name was unfortunate and misleading, for the paper did not contain scandal: it carried local and political news and Mrs. Royall's lively comments. After five years she rechristened it *The Huntress*, and continued this until July, 1854.<sup>39</sup>

In what proved to be her last editorial Mrs. Royall wrote:

We trust in Heaven for three things: First, that subscribers may give us the means to pay for this paper . . . We have only thirty-one cents in the world, and for the first time since we have resided in this city — thirty-one years — we were unable to pay our last month's rent. Had not our landlord been one of the best of men we should have been stripped by this time; but we shall get that from our humble friends.

Second, that Washington may escape that dreadful scourge, the cholera.

Our third prayer is that the UNION OF THESE STATES MAY BE ETERNAL.

Three months later she died, aged eighty-five. She was buried in an unmarked grave.

Mrs. Royall has not received the attention from historians that she deserves. A biographer who wrote in 1909 could find only one kindly or appreciative reference to her. The record is slightly better now. The author of *Forgotten Ladies*, (1928) included a rather favorable account of her under the derogatory title *The Widow With the Serpent's Tongue*. Similarly, a sympathetic biography printed in 1937 is called *The Uncommon Scold*. A recent writer on *The Beginnings of American English* refers to her with appreciation as the first commentator on the peculiarities of southern speech who was accurate enough to be worth quoting.<sup>40</sup> Her writings remain, an almost unworked mine of information about all parts of the country in her day. A "partial index" of the persons and places she described, compiled by her first biographer, runs to fifty-four pages.

Anne Royall embodied the spirit of her age. She had its crudity and lack of taste, and also its intense patriotism and passionate sympathy for the under-dog. She was a gallant

crusader, attacking anything which seemed to threaten freedom. She worked for justice to the Indians and to immigrants, for encouragement of scientific research, internal improvements, clean-up campaigns in Washington, and free public education everywhere. In private relations she was loyal, grateful, courageous, and lavishly generous to the poor and unfortunate. She was not a great writer by any literary standard, but she had many of the qualities of a great journalist; and her writings preserve an unsurpassed contemporary record of the country she ardently loved.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Homes from Home*

In the early days of America, the woman who had to support herself found a natural occupation in keeping an inn or a boarding-house. The typical hostess of a tavern was a widow carrying on her husband's business; hosts, it would seem, must have died young. At any rate many women, widows or not, made a living as innkeepers.

Some of the widows continued the business with outstanding credit. There was Mrs. Mary Engle, for example, of Chester, Pennsylvania. The historian of Chester recorded that the Blue Anchor Tavern was managed by Edward Engle until his death in 1810, and then until 1822 or '23 by his widow; and he added: "During the time of Mrs. Engle's proprietorship it was the popular and fashionable hotel of the place."<sup>1</sup>

Earlier than this, another Chester widow, Mary Withy, had achieved even wider reputation. The Columbia Hotel, which she owned and managed, was reported by travellers as unlike as Bishop Asbury and the Marquis de Chastellux to be one of the best taverns on the continent. Mrs. Withy retired in 1795 with what was considered a snug fortune.<sup>2</sup>

History is silent about the kind of inn managed by Hannah Brown of Southold, Long Island, but it would seem that she could cope with any difficulty.<sup>3</sup> Her husband had died early in the Revolutionary War, leaving her to bring up a large family of orphaned grandchildren, and in order to support them she turned to innkeeping. She was an outspoken patriot, and when British and Hessian troops overran the district, her position became dangerous. Augustus Griffin,

author of some reminiscences of early Southold, has given a somewhat partial account of her intrepidity:

It was in the autumn of 1777, on a pleasant evening, that a file of armed soldiers, without ceremony, entered the house of Mrs. Brown. The officer ordered Mrs. Brown to open the door of the room containing the liquors instantly, or he would stave it down. At this threat, accompanied by a horrid oath, she rushed between them and the door, against which she placed her back. He appeared a moment astonished at such fortitude, but collecting himself swore her instant destruction; and with great violence thrust the muzzle of his gun against the door, on each side of her person and as near as he could without hitting her. She stood facing and thus addressed him: "You unfeeling wretch, you hired tool of a tyrant, your conduct is worse than a savage, my situation you see here is lonely. I am without a human protector; but know you, Mr. Officer, surrounded as you are with men and arms, that I despise your threats, and if you pass the threshold of this door, you will first pass over my lifeless body."

According to Mr. Griffin, the officer (who seems to have shown remarkable forbearance) "quailed, muttered and grumbled a hasty retreat".

A New England widow inserted an ingenuous appeal in the *Columbian Sentinel* (Boston) for January 9, 1793:

*Fresh Pond, Cambridge*

Mary Burke

Invites those Gentlemen and Ladies, who wish an agreeable sleighing party, to visit her House, where they will find two excellent Halls for dancing. Her yard is well stored with poultry of every kind; her cellar with liquors of the best quality; her stable with the best hay and provender.

When persons can have this agreeable reflection joined with their amusements, that they are assisting the *Widow* and *Fatherless*, she flatters herself that she shall have sufficient business to support herself and family with decency and reputation. Every exertion shall be made to give satisfaction, and the smallest favours acknowledged with gratitude. . . . N. B. When a deep snow falls, the road from Fresh Pond to the Great Road in Cambridge, will be immediately broke, so as to make the sleighing good.

Evidently winter sports are no new thing. There were other diversions too. In October of the same year another Cambridge woman, Mrs. Fennecy, informed the public that she had returned to the house which she had formerly kept at

the Sign of Dr. Franklin, about three minutes from the new bridge, where she will entertain select companies, Fire Clubs, and Fishing Parties, in the best manner.<sup>4</sup>

Such ventures were not limited to Cambridge, nor to the North. *The Virginia Herald* for September 9, 1796, carried a card from Ann Gatewood, who informed the public that she had just opened a house of entertainment in what she called "that elegant and spacious brick tenement" at Fredericksburg, and that she was "determined to be at all times provided with the best of Liquors, good Stables, and plenty of Forage for Horses". Mrs. Gatewood did not rest content with the attractions listed. On September 27 she advertised an exhibition at the Tavern, including "a beautiful optical Representation of Geography and various other Views made for the Dauphin of France . . . [and also] the Guillotine of Louis 16". Admittance was two shillings and threepence, children half price.

Not all landladies, like these just noted, catered to a fashionable clientele. Hannah Balfour<sup>5</sup> of Norfolk, Virginia, continued the "Navy Tavern" after her husband's death (in December, 1800) with an eye to comfort rather than style. Mrs. Balfour repeated her husband's lengthy and effusive advertisements — merely changing the name and pronouns: "she flatters herself with the hope of pleasing those gentlemen who may favor her with their custom"; and so forth.<sup>5</sup> The card concluded thus:

Captains of vessels and others accomodated.

Beef stakes and Oyster Suppers, when called

for: Oysters, shelled and unshelled.

Private Rooms for Clubs.

Good attendance, having civil and attentive Waiters.

“Beef stakes” may have been tenderer than they sound. “Oyster Suppers” figured in many advertisements of the day. According to Charles Dickens, no evening party in America was complete without “at least two mighty bowls of hot stewed oysters, in any one of which a half-grown Duke of Clarence might be smothered easily”<sup>6</sup>.

John Davis, a humorous Englishman who travelled in the United States from 1798 to 1802, has left a sketch of another landlady who kept a naval tavern considerably less elegant than that of Mrs. Balfour. The following dialogue occurred, he said, while he and “George” were passing a Dutch church on Long Island.<sup>7</sup>

— Who reposes in that grave?

— The fat landlady, who kept the porter-house in Pearl-street and dealt her draughts of malt to the Club of Jolly Dogs. A dropsy had distended her to the size of one of her porter-butts.

— And into this underground cellar she is thrust at last?

— Yes! After a life of administering porter to drunkards and scoring down each tankard with a piece of chalk over the chimney. Disgrace to the memory of that man who ran in debt with her ladyship, and discharged not the reckoning. It was then she would unpack her heart with words. “A pretty Captain! Yes! A pretty Captain! Truly! He almost drank my cellar dry, and I never saw the stamp or color of his coin. He was a *Villain*, he must have been a *Villain* or he would never impose upon a defenseless widow-woman. But I never had the courage to ax him for his money. He swore so, that I shook like a leaf; I trembled like a rush. And he talked so much about his ship, and how he took in his small kites to engage a privateer, that I never doubted his honesty. He has paid me indeed, yes he has paid me with his fore-topsail and a fair wind — the wind a little upon the quarter. But I may catch him yet; and when I do catch him, there’s no snakes in *Virginia* if I don’t bring his nose to the gridiron.”

Among the inns already noted were a “Blue Anchor,” and a “Sign of Dr. Franklin.” Similarly, there were Mrs. Paul’s “Indian King” in Philadelphia, Eliza Hunt’s “Black Eagle Tavern” in Norfolk, another “Eagle Tavern” in George-

town, Kentucky, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> Names like these, reminiscent of England, had been common in the colonial period, but they gradually went out of use, and less imaginative titles took their place. Even during Mrs. Engle's regime, the "Blue Anchor" in Chester was changed to the "National Hotel." In October, 1801, Mrs. Little opened the "New York Hotel" at 42 Broad-street, where she served an "ordinary" (the equivalent, we may guess, of the business man's luncheon) every day at half past two. An ambitious establishment in Fredericksburg, Virginia, opened by Mrs. William D. Green in 1837 and managed later by Mrs. Fenton Smith, bore the humdrum name of the "Exchange Hotel." According to a local historian, this building was "the handsomest in the state"; it was made of pressed brick "of a beautiful red," and it had three storeys and a hall for theatrical purposes.<sup>9</sup>

The term "coffee-house" became common in this country around the mid-eighteenth century, and then it was used in the same sense as in England — for a place where coffee, tea, chocolate, and newspapers were the attractions. It continued to be used occasionally in the nineteenth century, but it lost its restricted meaning. Mrs. Kean of Augusta, Georgia, may perhaps have employed it in its original sense when, in September, 1795, she announced that she had "removed from the Coffee House" to a "large, commodious Red House on Broad Street" where she would keep a Boarding and Lodging House and where "Gentlemen store keepers may dine at any fixed hour agreeable to themselves." But the Schenectady Coffee House, run by Hester Hudson, was a regular hotel, and so also was Mrs. Hovey's Coffee House in Bath, Maine, with its "stables well provided with pro-vender."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps at all times the majority of establishments were commonly called simply "the hotel" or "the inn" or referred to by the name of the proprietor. There was the widow Dench's, in Waltham, Massachusetts; in June, 1777, the Boston papers carried a notice about a bay mare which had been found in that town: "The owner may have her again,

paying the charges, by applying to the widow Dench's, Inn-holder in the said town." In the autumn of the same year Mrs. Dench lost a porringer and silver spoon; she thought they had been stolen when Burgoyne's army marched through. Evidently she suspected a local person, for in December she offered a reward of \$10 for the still missing porringer.

In Newbury, Massachusetts, there was "Mrs. Leathers'" where William Pynchon, a Salem lawyer, regularly stayed when he had to go to the Newbury Court. Evidently he liked it, for on October 30, 1783 he noted in his diary: "Dined at Mrs. Leathers', but being somewhat lame remove nearer the court house." At "Mrs. Armistead's Tavern" in Bland, Virginia, Elizabeth Ramsay held an auction on April 16, 1796, to dispose of considerable real estate. The French School in Charleston met at Mrs. Nott's, — a boarding-house — in 1797. Again, at Mrs. Taylor's Tavern in Portsmouth, Virginia, the collector of revenue was to be found "on Thursday 24 September next [1801] to receive entries of carriages belonging to that place and Gosport." (Apparently a forerunner of the automobile tax.)<sup>11</sup>

In Washington, then a very young city, Rembrandt Peale had his "Painting Room" at Mrs. Dashield's, where he sold copies of the President's portrait, just finished. (This was in 1805, and the President was Jefferson.) And at Mrs. Wright's, in January, 1830, Mr. Planton, the surgeon dentist from Paris, sold "Incorruptible Teeth, which will never change color nor decay."<sup>12</sup>

The instances cited, which could be duplicated for other towns and other years, show the variety of uses to which the inns of the day were put. Apparently the landlady who kept a good house got her fair share of such business. Some land-ladies undertook what may be regarded as extra-curricular activities themselves. Take the following, for example, from the (Charleston) *City Gazette* for January 22, 1795:

Mrs. Timrod returns her warm thanks to her friends and the public for their encouragement in the tavern-keeping line, and informs them, that she has taken a commodious

house in King-street, between Tradd and Broad-streets, where she will be thankful for a continuance of their favors.

S. Timrod.

N.B. All those indebted for ferriage or otherwise at Parker's ferry she hopes will call and settle their accounts amicably, and not give themselves and her further trouble which would add to the many grievances and misfortunes she laboured under there.

Mrs. Hudson of the Schenectady Coffee House managed a more ambitious undertaking with apparent success. The *Mohawk Mercury* for May 19, 1795, carried this notice:

The public is informed that the Widow Hudson's four-horse stage leaves her Inn in Schenectady, every morning precisely at 5 o'clock (Sundays excepted) for the city of Albany; and starts from the city tavern in Albany at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and returns to Schenectady: — That her 2-horse stage sets off from the city tavern in Albany every morning (except Sunday) at 6 o'clock for Schenectady; and leaves Schenectady at 3 o'clock every afternoon for Albany.

*Stage Terms* — 5 shillings for a passage to or from Albany, 9 shillings going and returning the same trip, in either of the stages; 4 pence per mile for a passenger taken upon the road; 14 pounds baggage gratis, 150 pound rated the same as a passenger.

(Here followed instructions for reserving seats.)

The proprietor of the Stages informs the public that the Mail of the United States is carried in her four-horse stage, and that no difficulties may hereafter arise, she thinks proper to insert a clause of the law of the United States. (Here given, relating to penalty for obstructing the mails.)

The proprietor of the Stages begs further to add, that she has provided sober and skillful Drivers, and a sufficient number of able horse. It is her wish and full determination that such attention be paid to the business, and at her own house, as to merit the patronage of the public.

Hester Hudson

Mrs. Hudson's husband, then dead, had started the business. The author of *Schenectady, Ancient and Modern*, states that Mrs. Hudson continued the hotel, with a dry goods and grocery store in the same building, until her death.<sup>13</sup>

Most of the inns so far mentioned owed their patronage largely to the fact that they were located in a sizeable town or on a post road, and they were used chiefly by people traveling on business; a vacation from home was not part of the accepted order of things for any large number of people. Yet going away for one's health was not unknown, as witness the following card, found in the *Washington Spy* for July 6, 1791:

Entertainment at Bath  
Sign of the Flag

The subscribers have opened the Coffee House formerly occupied by Mr. Millen Wooly, where Gentlemen and Ladies coming to this place, for the benefit of the Water may expect genteel Boarding, as every exertion in our power to render their Lodgings comfortable will not be wanting by us.

John Hunter  
Mary Pullen

Bath, June 20.

There was seasonal migration, too. Ann Brown, "at the hotel, Statesburg" advertised in the newspapers of Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina, for 1795, that she had increased her accommodations for "such ladies and gentlemen as may be inclined (for the well established healthiness of the place) to spend a part of the approaching sickly season in the country."<sup>14</sup>

Some of the establishments mentioned were probably boarding-houses rather than hotels. The distinction between the two is vague. Like the colonial "coffee-house," the boarding-house usually had no license to sell liquor. Again, the boarding-house catered rather more than the hotel did to regular patrons, for meals, — at fixed hours, — and often for lodging. But the difference was a matter of degree only.

The term "boarding-house" has not been noted earlier than 1790. An important reason for its increasing popularity a decade or so later lay in the difficulty of finding servants. Always a problem in America, it was never more acute than in the early days of the nineteenth century. Domestic service had become unpopular with the native-born, who were finding a more attractive means of livelihood in the new fac-

tories; and immigrant girls were not coming in such large numbers as later.

Again, the rapid growth of towns created a situation favorable to the boarding-house. It brought together a large number of men without families — or in the textile mill towns, of women — and of families too little rooted to have a home. This was equally true in eastern cities and in new settlements on the frontier.

European travellers often spoke of the boarding-house as a typical American institution, and assumed, perhaps not quite fairly, that it was the preferred mode of living here. Miss Harriet Martineau, who made an extensive and observant tour of the United States from 1834 to 1837, believed that it was possible, although difficult, to find good servants. Few men, she said, liked living in a boarding-house, but it had an attraction for many women. She was much impressed with its disadvantages — the lack of privacy, the impossibility of training children properly, the temptation to gossip and idleness.<sup>15</sup> She summed up her opinion thus:

The more I saw of boarding-house life, the worse I thought of it; though I saw none but the best. — In the best it is something to be secure of respectable company, of a good table, a well-mannered and courteous hostess, and comfort in the private apartments: but the mischiefs of the system throw all these objects into the background.

Whatever the drawbacks, however, the boarding-house flourished.

Our chief source of information about the earlier houses lies in newspaper notices of a change of address or other humdrum fact. In 1795, for example, Agnes Daniels of Boston informed "her friends and the public" that she had removed from Dock Square to 14 Union Street, "where gentlemen may be boarded in a genteel manner at a reasonable rate." Only men wanted, apparently; but in the same year Mary Grammon of Providence gave notice that she had removed

from the West to the East Side of the Bridge, three houses

off the Market, in the Centre of the Town; where Ladies and Gentlemen may be accommodated with genteel Boarding and Lodging.<sup>16</sup>

The boarding-house was common in the South also. The *Charleston City Gazette*, for example, carried many notices of them. In May, 1797, Mrs. Bricken transferred her house from 6 Tradd Street to 14 Elliot Street. In the same year Mrs. Nott moved from 58 Church Street to 127 Broad Street, "where Gentlemen, as usual, may be accommodated with Boarding and Lodging, or Day Boarding." In January, 1798, Mrs. Frances Ramage went from King Street to a "new and *Elegant House* on Meeting Street." The French School, it may be remembered, was advertised to meet at Mrs. Nott's house; the other ladies might have entirely escaped attention had they not moved to a new address.<sup>17</sup>

Within a few years landladies became somewhat bolder and began to insert regular cards, just as proprietors of inns had long been doing. The boarding-house was *par excellence* the realm of the landlady, and although no name is given in the following announcement (from the *New England Palladium* for April 26, 1808), one can feel sure that it was the work of a woman:

#### Boarders.

A few respectable persons may be very pleasantly accommodated with Board at embargo prices at the second house in Deming's Court, nearly opposite Thomas and Andrews' Bookstore, Newbury Street. If any elderly Ladies should wish a Chamber for themselves they will find two or three that cannot fail of suiting them. — To such as will be punctual in their payments, every attention will be paid.

In the same year Mrs. Hollis, also of Boston, advertised in the *Palladium* for "five or six gentlemen who wish to be accommodated with Board, etc., during the sessions of the General Court."

County courts and state legislatures brought business to many a boarding-house, but a far greater opportunity arose with the creation of the national capital. The Washington

newspapers fairly teemed with cards inserted by genteel land-ladies. They often merely announced a new venture, a new address, or a vacancy for a given number of "gentlemen." But plenty of women advertised at length. For example, the *National Intelligencer* for November 29, 1805, carried the following:

WASHINGTON CITY  
BOARDING HOUSE  
MRS. THOMPSON

Respectfully informs the members of Congress and others, that having taken Two of the Six Buildings, she is prepared for genteel accommodation for a number of Ladies and Gentlemen, as transient boarders or by the year. Those who honor her with their custom will find it an eligible spot, situated one-half way between the President's house and George Town; dry, healthy, and convenient to the Public Offices. She has apartments for servants, excellent stables and coach houses, and will spare no pains to give general satisfaction.

In the same year J. D. Mallat, miniature painter, gave his address at Mrs. Thompson's, Six Buildings.

Most of these cards made a general promise of good accommodation. In 1821 Mrs. Argueles, whose late husband had been vice-counsel of Mexico, had a house on Pennsylvania Avenue with "fourteen spacious rooms, neatly furnished"; and she tried to allure patrons — either members of Congress, or visiting Mexicans and Spaniards, — with the assurance that "nothing should be wanting to furnish her table with all the varieties and delicacies of the season."<sup>18</sup> This was a new note. Good rooms, healthful or convenient location, assiduous attendance, were usually promised, but almost nothing was said about good food.

The newspaper advertisement shows the inn or boarding house from the proprietor's point of view — as she wished it to be seen. The guest's point of view is not always available; but it crops out, often with piquancy, in diaries, letters, and travelers' accounts. The form it took depends upon the

writer. George Washington, the champion inn-taster of his day, mentioned many landladies, but with only a dry business-like comment. On his journey through New England in 1789, he made his first stop at "the Tavern of Mrs. Haviland, who keeps a very neat and decent inn." The next day the party breakfasted "at Stamford, (at one Webb's) a tolerable good house, but not equal in appearance or reality to Mrs. Haviland's." In Boston he was lodged "at a widow Ingersoll's (which is a very decent and good house)." So far, praise; but on the return journey they stopped in Watertown "at the house of a widow Coolidge, and a very indifferent one it is." Again, in 1790, a journey through Long Island took him to the Widow Blidenburg's at Smithtown, "a decent house," and the Widow Platt's at Huntington, which he pronounced "tolerably good."<sup>19</sup>

Bishop Francis Asbury's comments were of a different kind. He traveled even more widely than Washington, and he must have put up at far poorer inns than those patronized by the President. But he paid little attention to creature comforts; his interest was in the human beings whom he met.<sup>20</sup> He often stayed with Mrs. Withy in Chester. In 1795 he noted that she had sold the hotel for £3000; and in April, 1810, he wrote:

At Chester church I preached the funeral of Mary Withy on Sat. (the 28th); she was awakened to a deep inquiry respecting the salvation of her soul whilst I officiated in her house at family prayer: this was in 1772, on my first journey to Maryland. She had lived twelve years a wife, 44 years a widow, and for the last 30 years kept one of the best houses of entertainment on the continent; in her household management she had Martha's anxieties, to which she added the spirit and humility of Mary. Her religious experiences had been chequered by doubts and happy confidence. She slept in Jesus.

A typical comment of Asbury's occurred in his journal for September, 1814, while traveling in Kentucky:

(Tues. 13) We dined in Georgetown at the Eagle Tavern, and after our meal called the family to prayer: the landlady

was a finished lady in her manners, and as kind as she was clever; peace, peace, peace, be upon her!

John Davis, the British traveler already quoted, gives a glimpse of another Methodist landlady:<sup>21</sup>

At a house of entertainment kept by Widow Myers, I was accommodated with a supper and bed. This buxom Widow was by persuasion a Methodist, and possessed of considerable property.

Into what part of the world has not Love found his way? The goat herd in Vergil discovered him to be an inhabitant of caverns; and the Widow Myers acknowledged his power in the Wilderness of the *Potomac Falls*. The muscular form of a young Scotchman enchain'd the glances of the pious Widow; whose eyes seemed to say to the brawny *Caledonian* "Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love!"

The comments found in diaries are often provokingly brief. Accounts in letters and books of travel, on the other hand, are usually more informative, and those by visitors from abroad noted details which the American public took for granted. Some of those written for publication, however, need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Dickens' *American Notes* said little about hotels and nothing about landladies, but chapter sixteen of *Martin Chuzzlewit* contained a full-length portrait of "Mrs. Pawkins' boarding house" in New York. Although it savours somewhat of caricature, it had plenty of prototypes; Mrs. Anderson's boarding-house in Memphis, described by Mrs. Trollope in *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, bore a strong family resemblance, and may have suggested it.<sup>22</sup> Writers more lenient than Mrs. Trollope and less given to hyperbole than Dickens piled up the same depressing details—guests wedged together at long tables, bolting heavy food as if in a mad race with starvation, the lack of conversation but not of noise, knives used as forks, and two-pronged forks serving as tooth picks, the reek of stale tobacco, worst of all, the ever-present spittoon. What wonder that most Americans had dyspepsia!

Henry Bradshaw Fearon, who published *Sketches of America* in 1818, gave a pleasanter picture of a boarding-house — that of Mrs. Bradish on State Street, New York City:

There are two public rooms, one for a sitting, the other a dining room. At present, about forty sit down to table. The lady of the house presides at the head of the table, the other ladies, who are boarders, being placed at her left. The hours are — breakfast, eight o'clock; dinner, half past three; tea, seven; supper, ten. — The hours of eating are attended to by all with precision; charge, two dollars per diem, exclusive of wine.

Fearon reckoned the weekly expense at about \$18, apparently allowing for the wine. He added that Mrs. Bradish charged more than the most elegant hotel in the city, and he had been told that she kept the best boarding-house in the United States, — one of the very few, moreover, which served afternoon tea.<sup>23</sup> These statements seem reasonable, as Mrs. Bradish's rates were considerably above the average.

Fearon gained the impression that Americans were no more considerate of their servants than other people, except verbally. The word "servant" was in ill-repute, and "help" was generally substituted. The following anecdote shows an attitude which must have caused trouble to foreigners:<sup>24</sup>

A friend of mine the other day met with a rebuff at his hotel which taught him the necessity of altering — not his ideas, indeed, but his words. Addressing the female "help" he said, "Be kind enough to tell your mistress that I should be glad to see her." — "My *mistress*, Sir! I tell you I have no mistress, nor master either. I will not tell her, Sir, I guess; if you want Mrs. M — you may go to her yourself, I guess. I have no mistress, Sir. In this country there is no mistresses nor masters. I guess I am a woman citizen."

Two British women travelers of a decade or so later left graphic accounts of their American experiences. Miss Martineau's books of travel are often quoted, but Mrs. Basil Hall's vivid letters to her sister are less well known. Miss Martineau, already famous as a writer, came to this country full of enthusiasm for democracy and determined to see everything;

and she did. Her ability to be happy in the midst of appalling discomfort reminds one of Mark Tapley. She was very deaf, and is said to have had no sense of taste or smell — perhaps fortunately; but she had a pair of sharp eyes, a serviceable ear-trumpet, and an unquenchable thirst for information.

Mrs. Hall, on the other hand, disapproved of democracy and found most Americans uncongenial. As her editor says,

her letters are a triumph of effortless observation, though in every case, (and this may be said of all of us) her understanding was limited by her disapprovals.

Had the letters been intended for publication, many of the barbed comments would doubtless have been omitted — to our loss. In one respect, Mrs. Hall's experience was probably unique: she and her husband brought with them a year-old daughter, and the baby's nurse. Both Miss Martineau and the Hall party travelled from New England to Louisiana, and as far west as the Mississippi. The modern reader will give them all high marks for endurance and courage.

Europeans in America often complained of the coldness — almost surliness — with which inn-keepers and waiters of either sex greeted a stranger. Miss Martineau made a point of breaking down this coldness and said that she always succeeded; yet she admitted:<sup>25</sup>

however soon it may be dissipated by a genial address on the part of the traveller, it certainly is very disagreeable at the first moment. . . . [Some Americans in Europe, she said, prefer the servility of waiters there.] . . . but I prefer the cordiality which brightens up at your offer to make your own bed, mend your fire, &c. — the cordiality which brings your hostess into your parlour, to draw her chair, and be sociable, not only by asking where you are going, but by telling you all that interests her in her neighborhood. At Maysville, Kentucky, the landlady sent repeated apologies for not being able to wait on us herself, her attendance being necessary at the bedside of a sick child. On our expressing our concern that, in such circumstances, she should trouble herself about us, her substitute said we were very unlike the generality of travellers who came. The ladies were usually

offended if the landlady did not wait upon them herself, and would not open or shut the window with their own hands, but rang to have the landlady do it for them. . . . Our landlady at Nashville, Tennessee, treated us extremely well; and on parting kissed the ladies of the party all round.

Not all landladies were reserved; and Miss Martineau met at least one who went to the opposite extreme:<sup>26</sup>

The liberty of intercourse on the road is very great and highly amusing to a stranger. One day in Virginia, on entering our parlour at a hotel where we were merely stopping to dine, I was amused to see our lawyer companion, Mr. S., in grave consultation with our hostess while Mrs. S., her silk bonnet on her knee and a pair of scissors in her hand, was busy cutting, slashing, and rending a newspaper on which the bonnet peak was spread. — “What *are* you about?” asked I. Mrs. S. pointed to the landlady, and trying to help laughing, told me that the hostess had requested the pattern of her bonnet. While this pretense of a pattern was in preparation by the lady, the hostess was getting a legal opinion out of the gentleman about a sum of 800 dollars which was owing her.

Mrs. Hall found both the coldness and the forwardness oppressive, and she did not know how to deal with them. In one letter she mentioned that inquisitive questions were more often addressed to Mrs. Cownie, the baby’s nurse, than to her. At Columbus, Georgia,

the landlady . . . said to Mrs. Cownie that I was very “stingy.”

“Stingy,” said Mrs. Cowie, “what do you mean?”

“I mean stingy in her talk,” rejoined the good lady. “I sat by her for half an hour and she hardly spoke a word to me.”

Now I had exerted myself to be particularly civil and had made one or two commonplace remarks with a very good grace, as I thought, but only fancy the misery of travelling in a country where, weary and hungry tho’ you may be, you are expected to make conversation to every ignorant low-bred mistress of a tavern you may chance to lodge with.

It would be interesting to know whether this landlady, whose name is not given, was the same with whom Miss Martineau stayed at Columbus, and of whom she wrote:<sup>27</sup>

Our hostess was civil, and made no difficulty about giving us a late breakfast by ourselves in consideration of our fatigues. Before one o'clock we dined, in company with seventy-five persons at one long table. The provisions were good, but ill-cooked.

“A late breakfast by ourselves” was an unusual indulgence. Travellers often complained of the difficulty of obtaining a meal at any other than the regular hour, or away from the public table. The objection was not, apparently, to the extra work, but to a resentment against what was regarded as a snobbish attitude toward the other boarders, and even more, to an unwillingness to depart from routine. On one occasion Thomas Ashe, who travelled extensively through the country in 1806, asked at a little inn near Paris, Kentucky, if he might have a plain breakfast at once. The landlady replied that she would “alter her ways for nobody,” and proceeded with tedious deliberation to cook an elaborate meal, one feature of which was killing and boiling a fowl!<sup>28</sup>

Miss Martineau recorded a similar experience:<sup>29</sup>

While traveling in Virginia, we were anxious one day to push on, and waste no time. — We told the landlady that we were excessively hungry and in some hurry, and that we should be obliged by her giving us anything she happened to have cooked, without waiting for the best she could do for us. The woman was the picture of laziness, of the most formal kind. She kept us waiting till we thought of going without eating. When summoned to table, at length, we asked the driver to sit down with us, to save time. Never did I see a more ludicrous scene than that breakfast. The lady at the tea-tray, tossing a great bunch of peacocks’ feathers, to keep off the flies, and as solemn as Rhadamanthus. So was our whole party, for fear of laughter from which we should not be able to recover. Everything on the table was sour; it seemed as if studiously so. The conflict between our appetites and the disgust of the food was ridiculous. We all presently gave up but the ravenous driver. He tried the bread, the coffee, the butter, and all were too sour for a second mouthful; so were the eggs, and the ham, and the steak. No one ate anything, and the charge was as preposterous as the delay; yet our paymaster made no objection

to the way we were treated. When we were off again, I asked him why he had been so gracious as to appear satisfied.

"This is a newly-opened road," he replied; "the people do not yet know how the world lives. They have probably no idea that there is better food than that they set before us."

"But do not you think it would be a kindness to inform them?"

"They did their best for us, and I should be sorry to hurt their feelings."

"Then you would have them go through life on bad food, and inflicting it on other people, lest their feelings should be hurt at their being told how to provide better. Do you suppose that all the travellers who come this way will be as tender of the lady's feelings?"

"Yes, I do. You saw the driver took it very quietly."

Against this episode, which was not unique, should be placed an account given by Fearon of a dinner in Massachusetts, where the American guests were harder to please than the traveling Briton:<sup>30</sup>

Our dinner was at the well-known Mrs. Fisher's, at Scituate. She is certainly a most original character; but I must, for the present, pass over a description of this oddity of oddities. The supply for our whole party consisted of beef, a ham, two fowls, potatoes, cabbage, and apple pie. They grumbled at the scantiness of the supply: for myself, no epicure ever enjoyed his dinner more, and chiefly because everything was cleanly.

Mrs. Hall agreed with Miss Martineau that Americans accepted extremely bad food and service without complaint. She suffered severely from the public tables and the unaccustomed and often inconvenient hours — the more disturbing because of the presence of a small child — and she was proportionately grateful for an occasional exception. On March 20, 1826, she noted:

I think our landlady at Riceborough [Georgia] was one of the kindest persons we have met with. She saw that we were anxious to have some breakfast for Eliza before starting, and she made one of her girls milk the cow an hour or two earlier than usual on purpose that there might be some for her. She had a pot of coffee prepared for me likewise, and

having seen that Eliza was much pleased with an apple pie that she had for supper last night, she put up a huge piece of it for her to carry off this morning.

Mrs. Hall, although critical, was in fact neither unreasonable nor unappreciative. At that time they were travelling, with one-night stops, to the Creek Indian reservation, and they were prepared for very simple accommodations. Six days after leaving Riceborough they stayed at Mrs. O'Neill's house, of which Mrs. Hall wrote:<sup>31</sup>

This is a superb house, in our eyes, after the accommodation we have been used to during the last five days. There are actually glass windows and we have had as much milk as we could make use of. As to the sheets being check, blue cotton we have got quite used to that, and are not to be daunted by such trifles. Besides we carry our own sheets and are therefore independent so far, but what is most agreeable is that the people seem willing to make us comfortable as far as lies in their power and appear to make us welcome.

Mrs. Hall indicated the sex of the proprietor in twenty-seven hotels and boarding houses which she patronized. Twelve of these were kept by women, and they furnished some of the best and some of the worst experiences. After leaving the Indian Country, the Halls turned south and arrived at New Orleans on April 16:

We had been recommended to Mrs. Herries's boarding establishment as the best, indeed the only tolerable establishment of any public kind in New Orleans. . . . We found Mrs. Herries willing and able to accommodate us with two good bedrooms but no private parlour, all our meals to be swallowed in public amidst the clatter of thirty pairs of knives and forks, at the rate of six dollars a day with the chance of higher terms being exacted should she be obliged to refuse admittance to anyone in consequence of Mrs. Cownie and Eliza occupying one of her best rooms.

The hotel in Louisville, Kentucky, — run by a man — proved unexpectedly good,

and for all we pay exactly one-half the money Mrs. Herries at New Orleans made us pay for everything that was bad and uncomfortable, but in the South the charges are every-

where exorbitant and the comforts small. In the Western country, on the contrary, everything is plentiful.

This praise of the West proved premature.<sup>32</sup> The hotel at St. Louis, reached on May 19, was bad:

We have already dined altho' it is now just two o'clock. Our meal was dispatched in the usual haste, indeed an American breakfast or dinner never fails to remind me of the directions given of old for eating the Passover, "With your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste"; and truly if the Israelites obeyed the command with a strictness equal to the American speed it must have been a strange sight. We are lodged here in the boarding house kept by Mrs. Paddock, who tells us that Lord Selkirk lodged with her when he was in St. Louis.

Lord Selkirk was Mrs. Hall's grandfather, but the coincidence gave her no comfort. Four days later she wrote:

This boarding house, taken all in all, is the worst we have yet been in. There is not the bustle and confusion of Mrs. Herries' at New Orleans, and it is cheap enough certainly, or rather I ought to say we pay little enough money, for really we get no more than the value of it either in food or comfort. 3 dollars a day is the charge for which we have three bad meals, positively not enough to eat at dinner. The whole attendance in the house consists of two dirty, black boys, the one eight and the other twelve years old, and they have everything to do, so you can imagine how it is done. I am told there is a woman in the kitchen, but she apparently confines her range of duties to that spot, and three strapping daughters attend to the laying of the table. The daughters are really very civil, but they have little in their power and the mother is a little, blunt, niggardly Yankee who seems desirous of squeezing all she can out of her boarders without giving them a just equivalent.

It is hardly surprising that the Halls were glad to turn their faces toward home; but the journey eastward had some pleasant features. In the previous December they had enjoyed the excellent boarding-house in Philadelphia kept by Miss Boyd,<sup>33</sup> and they returned there with thankfulness. On June 16 Mrs. Hall wrote:

What a round we have made since we left Philadelphia six months ago, and I must do Miss Boyd the justice to say that in all that time we have not been in so comfortable a house as this is.

Four days later she returned to the theme:

We have been living a life of the greatest luxury since we came here. I am quite dazzled and ask myself ten times a day if there is anything in the world more comfortable and more magnificent than Miss Boyd's boarding house. It would stand comparison very well with most places but when contrasted with the style in which we have of late lived it is magnificent indeed.

The Halls sailed for England about a week later. Perhaps the comfort, including the warm welcome, which they received from Miss Boyd was one reason why — to her own surprise — Mrs. Hall found herself really sad to say good-bye to America.

Miss Martineau furnished less precise information about hotels than Mrs. Hall — partly because she was often entertained by friends and partly because she was usually interested in other things — but she gave some vivid little sketches of landladies.<sup>34</sup> There was the one, for example, who "declared my trumpet to be the best invention she had ever seen — better than spectacles. Query, better for what?" She was more pleased at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, where she went to visit the grave of Joseph Priestley:

We were hospitably received at the clean little inn; and I presently discovered that our hostess could give me more information about Priestley than anybody else in the place.

And at Buffalo:

Our hostess was sewing when we went in, amusing herself meanwhile with reading snatches from Peter Parley which lay open before her. She put away her work to cook for us, conversing all the while and by no means sorry, I fancy, to have the amusement of a little company. She gave us tea, beef-steak, hot rolls and butter, honeycomb, and preserved plums and crab-apples.

Miss Martineau had to put up with some very disagreeable

accommodations in her journey through the West; but as it happens, all the worst places had men proprietors. The hostess of the inn at White Pigeon Prairie, Michigan, came in for praise, the warmer for the contrast, no doubt: "The charms of the settlement to us, were a kind landlady, an admirable breakfast in which eggs abounded, and a blooming garden."

Servants were always a problem, and the hotel keeper with relatives able to assist — like Mrs. Paddock's "three strapping daughters" — was fortunate. The letters of Mary and Catherine Byles depict a venture whose success rested on family cooperation.<sup>35</sup> Addressing a nephew in London on August 23, 1795, Miss Mary wrote: "Mrs. Archbold often inquires after you. She keeps a genteel boarding house, and appears to be in a very eligible situation." Five years later she sent Mrs. Archbold's greetings and continued, "It is an industrious family, and they have flourished accordingly." In August, 1801, she reported Mrs. Archbold's death, and added: "Nancy and Sally, poor girls, still keep up the boarding house, — their father is very infirm." A few days later she continued the story:

Mr. Archbold, since the death of his wife, has settled the whole of the property on his two daughters, Nancy and Sally, they engaging to support him in the manner to which he has been accustomed; they have paid off all debts and taken the boarding house in their own names; I am much pleased with this circumstance in their favour, which is certainly just, as the accumulation of this property has been owing to their unremitting industry.

Mr. Archbold died the next month. A year later Miss Catherine wrote:

The Miss Archbolds have relinquished their boarding house and taken a smaller habitation — where with much less fatigue and in very eligible circumstances they are keeping a shop with English goods.

The Archbold fortunes in their new "habitation" are followed in the next chapter.

One of the earliest books on vocational guidance for women appeared in 1863 — *The Employments of Women*. The author, Virginia Penny, had made a study lasting some years to find out what occupations women had already tried with success, what ones not yet tried offered a reasonable promise of success, and what qualifications were needed for each. Apparently few women managed hotels in 1863, for she wrote: "In early times, houses of entertainment for travelers were kept mostly by women." They still ran boarding-houses, but Miss Penny set the personal requirements high:<sup>36</sup>

Patience, a spirit of forgiveness, and an ability to overlook faults are very necessary . . . in this difficult and often ungrateful calling. A cheerful disposition, too, is almost indispensable. A love of society is desirable. . . . Whether those who keep boarding houses happen to have by nature more idle curiosity than others, or whether the business is one calculated to create and foster such a quality, I cannot say, but favor the latter opinion. The tempers of those who keep boarding houses are apt to be very much tried. They need great firmness and uniformity of deportment.

Apparently Miss Penny took for granted a capacity for hard work. But the proprietor of a boarding-house or the mistress of a hotel had one advantage over many of her working sisters: she does not appear to have suffered any discrimination, either in law or in custom, because of her sex.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Behind the Counter*

The “she-merchant” was a recognized figure in the business world of colonial days. In *Colonial Women of Affairs*, the estimate was offered that 9 or 10 per cent of the shops of the day were managed by women — double the proportion given by the census of 1900. Absolutely if not relatively, women shop-keepers seem to have been quite as common in the post-Revolutionary period, but one marked change is noticeable. A greatly increased number specialized in dry goods and in clothing for their own sex, but no more and in some cases fewer women have been found who sold other kinds of goods. This disproportion is so marked that, for convenience, all women shop keepers who sold any articles of dress of their own making are considered in the next chapter with the needlewomen.

Many shops were small affairs run by the family of the owner. Harriet Hanson Robinson, who wrote a graphic account of her girlhood in the Lowell mills, gave a glimpse of one.<sup>1</sup> Her father died in 1831, leaving a widow with four young children:

My father was a carpenter, and some of his fellow workmen helped my mother to open a little shop where she sold small stores, candy, kindling wood, and so on, but there was no great income from this and we soon became poorer than ever. Dear me! I can see the small shop now, with its jars of striped candy, its loaves of bread, the room at the back where we all lived, and my oldest brother (now a “D. D.”) sawing kindling wood which we sold to the neighbors.

Little information is available about this type of shop.

Our knowledge about more ambitious affairs is chiefly drawn from the newspapers, — to a greater degree than is true of any other kind of activity. Hence the interruption which most newspapers suffered during the Revolution affects our knowledge of the shops. Their business undoubtedly was affected also, but less seriously; apparently buying and selling went on much as in peace time.

Shops which dealt chiefly in imported goods suffered the most, but imports were by no means wholly cut off. Take the following notice in the *Boston Gazette* for August 16, 1779, for example:

To the Ladies, Advice.

Gauzes, Handkerchiefs, fine Silk Shoes and Slip-Shoes, new Mode's, Ribbons, blue Taffety, Sprigs and Flowers, Italian and French Gauzes of all sorts and Colours, Pearls and Feathers, Toppings, Pearl neck laces, Caps and Hats of a new Fashion, and every sort of Beauties, just received from France, to be sold by  
Madam Le Mercier, French Lady, at her  
store in Back Street.

Trade naturally followed politics, and the French importer gained part of what his English rival lost. Peace had not long been concluded, however, before trade with England was as brisk as ever. A long card in the *American Herald* (Boston) for May 17, 1784, began as follows:

Imported in the last ships from London, and now selling at the store of Margaret Phillips, in Cornhill, a little above the Market, a large and beautiful assortment of Picked Goods, Suitable to the Season.

A list of some forty odd items followed, including Dimothy, Florentines, Sattins, Shalloons, Tammies, Callimancoes, Everlastings, Osnabrigs, Tiffanies, and Cambricks, and concluding with "Scotch Bibles and Ink Powder, to be sold, wholesale or retail, for cash." The notice ended:

The above Goods, coming well charged, will be sold as cheap, at least, as at any shop in town. Town and country friends and customers are invited.

In December, 1784, Mrs. Greely and Miss Love, of 33 Marlborough Street, Boston, advertised a similar line of goods from London, and added spices and sugar.<sup>2</sup> These ladies were among the earliest noted to give a street number. The practise of numbering buildings must have been a help to customers, but it became a hindrance to the historian; the number was often considered identification enough, and the proprietor's name omitted.

The articles advertised reflected changes of fashion, and often the influence of striking personalities and events. In March, 1792, Mrs. Bryce of 30 Smith Street, New York, listed: "Rutland robes in pink and foil trimmed; Devonshire jackets and petticoats fancy trimmed; Rutland caps, Fayette ditto." The beautiful Duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire evidently made their influence felt even across the sea, and the "Fayette ditto" was no doubt a tribute to the Marquis. Again, in December, 1806, Miss E. Oliver of Washington included in her "large and elegant assortment of Fancy Goods," running to seventy-seven items, Trafalgar feathers, Trafalgar necklaces, and Trafalgar silk for dresses. In February, 1818, Miss E. Stewart, also of Washington, called attention to her Wellington sacks and an elegant assortment of Parisian gowns.<sup>3</sup> The sacks, one may assume, were not from Paris.

In order to emphasize a recent importation, advertisers often named the ship by which their goods had come. Ann Bent, a prominent Boston shop-keeper, of whom more later, opened her new shop at 56 Marlborough Street on April 28, 1800, with an elaborate assortment brought by the *John Adams* from Liverpool and by the *Helen* from London. Mrs. M. Williams of Baltimore called attention in October, 1803, to a "superb collection of fashionable cloaks and spencers" imported via the *Atalanta*. In June, 1795, Mrs. Anne Henry, a frequent Charleston advertiser, displayed fashionable millinery just brought from London by the *Federalist*.<sup>4</sup>

Several merchants boasted that not only their goods but they themselves came from abroad. Madame Le Mercier, "the French lady" in Boston has already been mentioned. In

1794 an unnamed "Lady just arrived from France" was advertising her handsome stock of gowns and bonnets in Charleston. Paris did not monopolize the stage: the Boston papers in 1791 announced that Mrs. S. Sparhawk had

lately arrived from London with a genteel assortment of Millinery which she purchased of some of the most fashionable Milliners, at the West end of that town.

Mrs. Sparhawk advertised frequently in the Boston papers through 1793, and then went to New York. In April, 1797, she gave notice that she had moved from 59 Maiden Lane to 133 William Street. She never failed to mention her London connection.<sup>5</sup>

Next to coming from Europe, it was an advantage to come from a larger American city. Thus in December, 1804, M. Jones, "late of Philadelphia" invited the ladies of Washington and Georgetown to inspect her handsome assortment of goods, to be sold at Philadelphia prices. Again, in May and June, 1801, Mrs. F. Pec "just from Philadelphia" offered the Norfolk ladies a fine array of hats, feathers, and gold and silver ornaments.<sup>6</sup> Apparently she was an itinerant merchant, for she warned them that her stay in town would be but short.

Consignments of goods from the larger cities, also, were advertised. In 1795 Elizabeth Macey of Savannah announced that she had received from New York<sup>7</sup>

A Fresh supply of dry goods and a complete assortment of groceries, elegant sets of India china, glass and crockery ware of all sorts, which she is now selling very low for cash or produce only, at her store in Ellis's Square, near the Market.

The use of produce instead of money, often solicited in colonial days, was seldom invited after the Revolution, — although it may very well have been often accepted.

General stores like Elizabeth Macey's were by no means confined to small towns, such as Savannah was in 1795. Although all the women so far mentioned laid stress on their dry goods and millinery, a number of them carried other lines also. Rose Owens of Norfolk, for example, stocked

"Lutestrings and teas, of the latest importation from India," in February, 1801, and in the spring she added seeds. In the same year Abigail Gendle of 23 Cornhill, Boston, (who advertised in the Worcester papers that she paid particular attention to "memorandums from the country"), called attention to her superfine Hyson tea. Priscilla Abbot of Salem sold not only Hyson, Souchong, and Bohea tea, but also China cups and saucers to drink it in.<sup>8</sup> All these ladies apparently considered their dry goods as their chief attraction.

Before leaving the clothing shops, one unique advertiser may be quoted. Cards from Mrs. Causey (in one paper called Casey) often appeared in the late eighteenth century Boston newspapers.<sup>9</sup> On September 14, 1791, she informed

the publick, and her friends in particular, that she has removed from Oliver's Dock to the Shop adjoining the White-horse Tavern, South-end; where she purposes carrying on her Business, as usual, with an addition of Business not much practised in this town, of buying, selling, and taking on commission, cast CLOTHES, of men, women, and children; and to help those who are not able to pay the Tailors, Mantua-makers, and Milliners, with clothes ready to their hand, at a reasonable rate; and at the same time will give others an opportunity of clearing their houses of Cloathing outgrown, out of fashion, or useless to them; and will wait on any person who may have such cloathing by them, to receive them, and make returns with all convenient speed.

Cake business carried on as usual in its various branches. Two years later Mrs. Causey recited an imposing list of second hand clothing, including women's "Josephs" and satin, mode, and lambskin cloaks. In 1795, she concluded an announcement about the second hand clothing and the cake business with the addition that she also took in furniture of all kinds.

Some women merchants carried dry goods as a side line only, or eschewed them altogether.<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Norman of Petersburg, Virginia, sold "London and Northwood fashions," but devoted her advertisement to an enumeration of china, glass, and plated ware. Hannah Ferari of Boston called attention to her

FRESH PERFUMERY from *London*, France, and Italy; real Otto of Roses; . . . Poland, Starch, Hair Powder, Lorillard's Maccaboy Snuff, smoaking Tobacco, Fine chewing do., & twisted, real Spanish Cigarrs, Webb's celebrated patent Suspenders. Likewise an assortment of Dry Goods.

Again, Martha Pike of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was prepared to sell

a quantity of corn, . . . wheat and salt, . . . new Flour . . . Bar Iron . . . a few Casks of genuine essence of Spruce, a second hand half Sweep Fall Back Chaise and Harness; also a very genteel assortment of West India and English and other India-Goods, of late Importation, all cheap for Cash.

Seeds as well as bonnets generally came from Europe. Susannah Renken of Boston began in 1764 to advertise a fresh stock of garden and grass seeds every spring. In 1776 the usual notice was missing, but it reappeared in 1777 and for some years thereafter. A card in the Boston papers in the spring of 1787, inserted by Susannah Marten, from her shop in the South-End, showed what our great-grandfathers had to choose from. She mentioned four different kinds of peas; cabbage seeds, early and late; parsnip, carrot and beet seeds; "Collyflower, Sweet Marjoram, and Thyme, Long green prickly Cucumber and long green other ditto"; several sorts of lettuce; all kinds of beans; herd's grass and other grass seeds. She concluded a similar notice in the spring of 1791: "A very large likely COW to sell."<sup>11</sup>

Beside Rose Owens of Norfolk, Mrs. Butler and these two Susannahs of Boston, and Mrs. Dickson of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, (mentioned in Chapter V,) there was a Mrs. Hepburn of Washington who advertised cabbage seed, "just received from Philadelphia."<sup>12</sup> Without a doubt many other women merchants of the time sold seeds, but it is curious that search through a large variety of newspapers between 1776 and 1840 should have brought to light only these six who listed seeds, while in a much smaller number of newspapers before 1776, ten were discovered.

Imported china has been mentioned. The finer kinds of

metal goods also came from abroad. In December, 1797, Mrs. Tucker of Charleston announced a fresh consignment from London, among which were Brass "Handirons," Coffee Biggins, and coffee pots of both copper and tin, roasting ovens of various sizes, with spits and skewers, a handsome wire parrot cage, some copper stills with pewter worms, and a variety of saucepans, ladles, moulds, and boxes.<sup>13</sup> "Handirons" seem to show a cockney origin; yet the dictionary sanctions the *h*. Hardware for common use was already being made in this country. In 1795, for example, Miss Sally Salter of Boston advertised an assortment of iron skewers, spoons, and other kitchen utensils, made in Lynn.<sup>14</sup>

Book shops of any sort were not common, and it is not surprising that few were kept by women. Yet several women booksellers have been found. Mary Katharine Goddard of Baltimore and Mrs. Dickson of Lancaster both added shops to their printing business, as noted in chapter V. Mrs. Mary Butler of Boston, who at different times offered for sale dry goods, groceries, dolls, seeds, and lottery tickets, announced in the *Massachusetts Centinel* for May 14, 1788, "A Library of Books for sale or to let."<sup>15</sup>

The book shop opened on West Street, Boston, in 1839, by Elizabeth Peabody stood on a different plane from these small ventures. This is said to have been the only place in Boston where foreign books were regularly stocked. It served as a Yankee *salon*, and all kinds of reformers, in particular the Transcendentalists, used to meet there. Miss Peabody was related by marriage to Nathaniel Hawthorne and Horace Mann, and she had considerable influence on them. She is best remembered for her association with Bronson Alcott as a pioneer kindergartener, but this came after 1840, as well as the printing press set up at the back of her shop, from which issued several books by Hawthorne and by Margaret Fuller. Miss Peabody ended an unusually full and useful life in 1894, at the age of ninety.<sup>16</sup>

One would not have expected many women booksellers, but the case is different in regard to groceries. Relatively few

advertisements have come to light of women who appear to have dealt exclusively in eatables. There was Elizabeth Miller, "on the Parade, Newport," (Rhode Island) who in June, 1791, announced her stock of: "Coniac, Brandy of a superior flavour, with a fresh assortment of Wines, Spirits of the most approved quality, Sugars, and other Groceries, as usual." William Pynchon of Salem noted in his diary for July 3, 1783: "G. calls at Beck's but her cake is so dear he buys none." Betsy Deacon, of 10 Marlborough Street, Boston, offered "Parmassan Chesse, — excellent good, for one shilling and fourpence the pound." In August, 1792, Mrs. Ramage of Charleston had white wine vinegar for sale at two shillings the gallon, or one shilling and ninepence in larger quantities, and also "Sallupe, fresh imported, at half a dollar per pound." Her advertisement is of interest in the way it combines the old and the new system of coinage.<sup>17</sup>

An advertisement found in the *Columbian Centinel* (Boston) for October 23, 1793, must have sounded attractive on a cold autumn day:

#### HOT PIES

MRS. KNEELAND

has opened a new Pye-Shop  
at the North part of the town, opposite Mr. Elliot's  
Meeting House,  
where the best MEAT PIES

may be had from 11 o'clock in the day, until 1 o'clock  
and from 8 until 10 o'clock every evening.

Mrs. Kneeland was probably more reasonable in her charges than "Beck" for she seems to have done well. She was soon advertising not only pies but also "Puddings, Custards, Cakes, &c."

Two Charleston women undertook to quench the thirst of their neighbors. In June, 1795, Mrs. Hunt, widow of Captain Thomas Hunt, advertised for sale:<sup>18</sup>

The best double SPRUCE BEER — from the real patent Quebec essence, with several additions, which render it superior to any other beer manufactured in this city.

This delectable beverage was sold at ten pence a gallon, or seven shillings for ten gallons; and Mrs. Hunt gave emphatic directions about the return of empty bottles.

Spruce beer had a homely sound, but not so the offer set forth in the *City Gazette* for February 26, 1798:

#### Mrs. LE CAT

Thanks the Public of Charleston for the Favors conferred on her in the *Pastry Line*; she offers to the Ladies and Gentlemen all kinds of *Cordials* distilled by her, as she used to do formerly in London, such as Aniseed, Cinnamon, Caraway Seed, Noyau, &c, &c.

She likewise offers to Families, at a moderate price, the best Spanish Shrub, superior to any ever imported in this town, by Quart or by Gallon, at No. 30, Broad-street.

All these notices, as it happens, are dated before 1800, but the enterprises did not stop then. Mrs. Caroline Dall, in a privately printed book of reminiscences called *Alongside* wrote:<sup>19</sup>

It was in 1835, I think, that ice creams were first sold by the glass in Boston, and it then became the fashion to go to the tiny shop of Mrs. Laurence Nichols, . . . There the most delicious creams and cream cakes could be had.

The ice cream was sold, she recalled, in glasses of two sizes, one for 12½ cents and the other for 6¼ cents.

Some women managed work-shops which turned out articles quite unconnected with traditional women's employment. Most but not all of them appear to have been widows who carried on a deceased husband's business, sometimes temporarily, sometimes indefinitely. Take the following card in the *Maryland Journal* for April 1, 1788:

Composition Work. Mary Rawlins begs leave to inform her Friends, and the Public in general, that she carries on the Composition work in all its Branches, (such as Moulding, and Ornaments for Doors, Windows, and for Wood Cornices, and particularly Chimney-Pieces in the neatest and newest Fashion) which was carried on by her late Husband John Rawlins, and at the same place, on St. Paul's Lane, near

Mr. Jesse Hollingsworth's, where any Orders directed to her will be thankfully received, and duly attended to.

N.B. M. Rawlins has on Hand, some Chimney-Pieces, ready finished, which she will dispose of on the most reasonable Terms.

In the South Carolina *State Gazette* for January 7, 1794, Dorothy Philips advertised her late husband's stock of saddlery for sale, but she assured his regular customers that they would be supplied as usual; apparently she was continuing the business but on a smaller plan. The oddly named Mrs. S. Pencill, also of Charleston, showed more courage. In the *City Gazette* for June 16, 1797 she asked her late husband's friends

both in Town and Country for a continuance of their favors in the TIN PLATE-WORK; being determined to use every exertion to give satisfaction and meet their approbation.

Ann Dickenson of Philadelphia displayed similar determination. She notified the public through the *Pennsylvania Packet* for February, 1788, that she would maintain her late husband's business of manufacturing wall paper and that she had on hand "some of the newest patterns, and some never before exposed". Sarah Graham of Aurora, New York, announced in June, 1806, that she had hired an assistant to aid her in carrying on her late husband's drug business. And Ann Kip, widow of Richard, upholsterer, of 60 Broadway, New York, in October 1793, indicated her intention to keep on the business in all its branches.<sup>20</sup>

The upholstery business, so near akin to dress-making, would seem a natural one for women to undertake. A woman in Philadelphia did not have to wait for her husband's death to have her share in it recognized. An announcement which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Packet* for April 7, 1787 is open to criticism grammatically, but it is of interest in acknowledging a wife's contribution to the family enterprise:

H & Amelia Taylor, Upholsterers from St. James's, London, Takes this method to return their thanks to those Ladies and Gentlemen who have favoured them with employment since

their residence in this city, and beg leave to solicit their further favours, and those of the Public in general, as they are determined to make up their work in the best manner, with despatch, and at the lowest prices, for ready money. Any persons that prefer having their work cut out and made up at their own house, will be waited on. All kinds of Trim-mings and Tassels made on the shortest notice.

P.S. Ladies Hair Petticoats, Rope Hoops, Bishops, with every other kind of Needle Work, made up in the most compleat manner. Wanted, A Young Woman as an Apprentice.

The following card, also grammatically shaky, is taken from the *Columbian Centinel* (Boston) for April 29, 1795:

The Widow Elizabeth Flagg and daughters, having great cause for gratitude for past favours, wishes in this way to express it; and likewise inform their friends and the public that they carry on the business of Rivetting and mending China and Glass, and Needle work of all kinds, at their house, near the Boston stone. The employer may expect the strictest attention, and the smallest favour gratefully acknowledged by the employed.

Whether the humble Flagg family inherited their business does not appear. Nor is a dead husband mentioned in the announcement in the *Royal Gazette* for September 12, 1781, by Ann Hawes, at "No. 2 behind the Old Church" in Philadelphia, "that she still continues the Painting and Glazing business, as usual, in all its Branches".

Another glass-working enterprise required more specialized skill, furnished by the lady herself, probably a refugee from the French Revolution. This announcement came from the *Pennsylvania Packet* for June 25, 1795:

Glass Engraver. Mrs. Decamps from Paris, informs the Public, that she has just opened her store, north Third street, No. 95, where she engraves with borders, flowers, garlands, cyphers, figures, escutcheons, &c., in the most elegant, fashion-able, neat and new style — all sorts of glasses, and glass wares, on the most reasonable terms. All orders will be thankfully received and punctually executed.

Newspaper advertising seldom tells much about these women except what they had to sell. Now and then some-

thing more personal or unusual emerges. For example, Mary Ann Pic [sic] of Georgetown, who often listed impressive showings of imported finery in the Washington papers, had domestic troubles to which she did not tamely submit. The *National Intelligencer* carried the following conspicuous notice:<sup>21</sup>

#### MARY A. PIC, OF GEORGETOWN

Inform the Public that she carries on business at her *Old Shop* on her own account, and that she is authorized to trade in *all* respects as a feme sole, wholly independent of her husband's control, and the present effects in the store are solely and exclusively under her care and direction. The articles of separation between her husband and herself and the power and authority to conduct business for her own profit and emolument have been carefully drawn and are recorded for public inspection. She solicits the patronage of a discerning public and will endeavor to give satisfaction to all who will honor her with their custom. All debts for the store will be paid by her in due course.

A Boston merchant suffered in a different way. In April, 1808, S. Neale had announced that she had just imported a "very extensive and elegant assortment of ladies, gentlemen's, youth's and children's Hosiery", to be sold wholesale or retail.<sup>22</sup> A fortnight later she inserted the following:

#### TEN DOLLARS REWARD!!

Stolen from the windows of the Stocking Store, No. 34 Marlborough street, on Saturday morning last, 1 dozen men's plain, and 1 dozen ribbed sorted worsted Hose. The above reward will be given to any person who will detect the Thief or Thieves, or return the goods to the subscriber at the above store.

The diary of William Pynchon tells the story of a Salem merchant who sought help after a robbery in another way. On February 15, 1784, Pynchon wrote:

Mrs. Hathorn sets out for Providence to visit the conjurer to find her goods.

Feb. 20. *Fri.* Great part of Mrs. H.'s goods are found at Marblehead, parts being offered for sale and to exchange at

very low rates; Jack sets out for Providence to call her home from the conjurer's; the receivers &c of the goods are brought over from Marblehead, examined, and part of the goods found and the persons committed.

21, Sat. . . . The Hathorns return from Boston with one of the thieves, and Constable Bickford from Marblehead, with some more of the goods.

Perhaps Salem's reputation regarding witches was still strong enough to keep the conjurer as far off as Providence. Mrs. Hathorn herself and her daughter might have been in some danger, one would think, judging by the account of that other Salem diarist, Dr. Bentley. On March 25, 1802, he wrote:

Last Tuesday died in this Town Mary Hathorne, possessed of a property of 40,000 dollars. She was a d[aughter] of William Hathorne and early became a great pedestrian trader. From small beginnings, great economy, and unceasing attentions, she acquired a great interest. She had few female attractions, but was far from any natural defects of person or understanding. Her mind was not cultivated, her passions strong, & her love of wealth boundless. Her life has been shortened by an intemperance of which she had too many examples around her. She never was known to make small presents. From small things she made great savings, but friendship could not render her liberal, & bountiful. She never forgot an injury, but was not apt to take offense. Her mother and surviving sisters have been blessed in her life & in her death.

The mother, Pynchon's Mrs. Hathorne, lived three years longer, and Bentley wrote of her as follows (June 22, 1805):

This week has also died Wid. Mary Hathorne, aet. 83. She was a Tousel from the family which came from the Island of Jersey & which married into the Hathorne family in the past generation. — By a most slavish gypsy life, she acquired property in peddling from Salem in the neighboring towns, by a parsimony almost unexampled among us. In advanced life all the Children suffered from this mean education tho' no family has more pride of descent. Most of the daughters have perished miserably by the most degrading intemperance, and one of the Sons. A son & two daughters survive.

The town is full of tales of their drams & payments for them. They hold much of the property of the first Hathorne but the family in this branch has lost the primitive manners & influence & reputation.

[The diarist did not live to see the Hathorne reputation restored in the person of Nathaniel — whose own whim is responsible for the *w* in his surname.]

Dr. Bentley's sketch of these women is of particular interest as information about peddlers is rare, but brief glimpses of several such are given in *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America*, by Richardson Wright. Although the exact dates are not stated, it would appear that they belong to this period. Women, Wright wrote:<sup>23</sup>

were the special vendors of fruit and vegetables, before the descent of the Greeks, Armenians, and Italians. Sometimes they went about with a tray on the head and cried their wares through the streets. Wilmington, Delaware, had a picturesque and rotund lassie known as "Dutch Mollie" who peddled vegetables and is said to have had quite a past. . . .

In Philadelphia were found negro women pushing carts on which were round kettles of pepper pot kept warm over charcoal, and some pretty blue striped bowls and spoons. They chanted this inducement: — "All hot! All hot! Makee back strong! Makee live long! come buy my peppor pot." . . . Women and girls selling hot corn were not uncommon. And their song was a delight to the ear: —

Hot corn! Hot corn! 'Ere's yer lily-white hot corn! One hot corn girl specially seems to have captured public imagination. She sold in the streets of New York. Her name was Clio, a quadroon fair to look upon of about twenty summers, daughter of a fugitive slave. Her slow chanting voice was one to throw passers-by into raptures. Stephen C. Foster tried to make a song of her cry. "There is a wild wooing tone in her voice," he said, "that I cannot catch." So the song was never written.

Diaries, letters, and travellers' accounts yield far less information about shop keepers than they do about other kinds of workers, — hotel keepers and teachers, for instance. Yet here and there one comes across glimpses more vivid than

those to be gleaned from newspapers. William Loughton Smith, who kept a diary during his journey with George Washington through the New England states in 1790, gave an amusing glimpse of a Newport woman:

Wed. (August) 18th. . . . On our way through the main street in Newport, the President desired Mr. Nelson, one of the gentlemen of his family, . . . to step into a store and buy a pair of gloves for him. Mr. Nelson in vain applied to the mistress of the store who would not stir from the window where she stood with her eyes riveted on the President, after having first hastily thrown a bundle of gloves on the counter; the delay occasioned by the lady's refusal to assist in finding a proper pair of gloves, induced the President to enter the shop, where he provided himself with gloves to the great gratification of the above lady, who had little idea that the gloves were wanted for him.

A case where the rain fell on the unjust. No doubt the lady treasured the story of how President Washington bought gloves of her for the rest of her life.

Miss Byles of Boston has already been quoted about the Archbold sisters, who in 1802 relinquished their boarding house in favor of

a smaller habitation near the concert hall, where with much less fatigue and in very eligible circumstances, they keep a shop of English goods.

In 1807 Miss Byles mentioned them again and spoke of the "glittering appearance" of their evidently successful shop. In 1811 she reported that the shop had been burnt, but a great part of the stock was saved; the shop would be repaired and reopened. But in March, 1814, came the news that Sally Archbold was engaged to a widower with six children! Her sister would live with her; it must have seemed like a return to the boarding house.<sup>24</sup>

Biographies, town histories, and memoirs give the name of a shop-keeping woman now and then, but seldom much more. The historian of Wethersfield, Connecticut, listed Anna Deming as one of the most prominent merchants in the town: she continued her husband's business after his early

death in 1789, with "an extensive assortment of European and Indian goods". Mary J. Fleet of Boston noted in her diary under date of June 6, 1799, "Gave 20 shillings to Mrs. Prime for 12 pounds of coffee". In *Grandmother Tyler's Book* one reads:

Aunt Kate and my mother soon opened a little shop, where they traded in English goods till my sister Kate grew up and married Henry Putnam, Esq., a promising lawyer, who settled in Brunswick, Maine, where mother went also, dissolving partnership with Aunt Kate, and expending most of her gains in establishing the young people in their new home.

The shop, in Watertown, Massachusetts, was opened in the winter of 1797-98. "Sister Kate", who was married in 1807, became the mother of George Palmer Putnam.<sup>25</sup>

And so on. Such entries are of importance only in showing that many women merchants existed, and that they were taken as a matter of course in their communities.

Some women merchants, indeed, were more than a matter of course. Virginia Penny, writing in 1862, reported that many of the fortunes in Boston were said to have been founded by women engaged in trade.<sup>26</sup> As far as the present writer can judge, the women of other cities engaged in business with equal freedom and success; but there were certainly several outstanding Boston women about whom information has been preserved.

Miss Penny may well have had in mind, *inter alia*, the Perkins and allied families. Thomas Handasyde Perkins, a leading merchant and citizen of the early nineteenth century, owed much to his mother, Elizabeth Peck Perkins. His father, an ardent Patriot who had acted as agent for the extreme Whig party, died in 1773, leaving his widow with eight young children and an extensive importing and shipping business to look out for. She met the situation with courage and skill. An attractive advertisement of imported china and glass ware which she inserted in the Boston newspapers for 1773 is quoted in *Colonial Women of Affairs*. She was part owner

of a vessel which was leased to the French government for a while, to help transport troops to the West Indies. She had frequent correspondence with a Dutch house, which — apparently in compliment to her ability — always addressed her as *Mr.* Elizabeth Perkins. During the Revolution she aided Earl Percy's regiment "as sick men but by no means as British soldiers". After the war she continued to import china.

Her granddaughter Eliza, afterward Mrs. Samuel Cabot, wrote of her in some unpublished *Family Reminiscences*:

Her house on Purchase Street was one storey, . . . and her counting room was in State Street. She always did all the housekeeping herself, and after her husband's death at forty-two, she managed the business. . . . Madame Perkins was a very liberal minded person for those days; she called herself Universalist because she could not agree to everlasting damnation.

Mrs. Perkins was active in philanthropies as well as in business, and she was particularly concerned for sick women and children. At her death in 1807, the officers of the Boston Female Asylum wore a mourning badge for seventy-one days (a day for each year of her age) in token of "their grateful and affectionate sense of her liberal and essential patronage as founder and friend of the institution." A number of prominent Boston families are descended from her.<sup>27</sup>

Another Boston woman, Mary Pickard Ware, wife of the Unitarian clergyman Henry Ware, had unusual merchantile experience when very young. Her father, an importer, had suffered severely during the War of 1812, and in 1817 Mary, then only nineteen years old, undertook to assist him in the management. In 1818 she made a journey to New York, armed with full powers to carry through some important transactions. Her biographer, unfortunately for us, was chiefly interested in Miss Pickard's religious experiences, but he mentioned that her letters from New York dealt with the purchase and sale not only of various articles of dry goods but also of "skins, saltpetre, and the like." Mrs. Ware discontinued these activities after her marriage.<sup>28</sup>

The majority of women merchants, like the two just named, continued a business already established by a male relative. The leading woman merchant of pre-Civil War Boston, however, was a spinster who built up her business from the very beginning.

Ann Bent was born in Milton in 1768, and she died in Canton, Massachusetts, in 1857. When only sixteen years old she was apprenticed to a Boston firm which dealt in crockery and dry goods, and as soon as she was twenty-one (in 1789), she opened a shop of her own. Her advertisement of goods just imported from England when she moved to 56 Marlborough Street, in 1800, has already been quoted, and in May 1808 she announced a second move, to 57 Marlborough Street. She was not a frequent advertiser; evidently she attracted trade by other means.

Mrs. Dall wrote of Miss Bent and another shop-keeper, Miss Kinsley:<sup>29</sup>

They were the first women in our society to confer a marketable value upon taste. Instead of importing largely for themselves, they bought of the New-York importers the privilege of selection, and always took the prettiest and nicest pieces out of every case. As they paid for this privilege themselves, so they charged their customers for it, by asking a little more on each yard of goods than the common dealer.

Other people must have agreed with Mrs. Dall's comment: "I know nothing for which it is pleasanter to pay than for taste", for Miss Bent's business prospered. She kept house for a large family of sisters, nieces, and cousins, and was the center of a wide circle of friends, among whom were many of the leading literati and reformers of the day. She was an active member of William Ellery Channing's parish. Her business success gave her not only a livelihood but also the means of wide generosity.

The introduction to Miss Bent's obituary published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* for March 18, 1857, is worth quoting less for the light it throws on her career than on the attitude toward such a career:

Her own worthiness would justify the eulogy of esteem and affection, but some memorial of her is likewise called for, that her pure, and in certain respects peculiar example, may be studied and imitated at least in the right principles which produced it. The path she trod, with dignity, delicacy, and unswerving independence, was, when she entered it, seldom ventured upon by her sex. To support herself and get the means of helping others, she assumed a position involving a degree of publicity and responsibility from which many would have shrunk. Her doing so, and her success in so doing, show the sound judgement and decisive will that were the solid foundations of a character, garlanded by many fragrant graces, — the motive forces of a life of consistent and rare usefulness.

The author of the chapter on "Women" in volume 4 of the *Memorial History of Boston* displayed a similar point of view:<sup>30</sup>

Boston women have learned to respect work, and a woman can earn her living by labor of any kind, if she be honest, intelligent, and pure in her life, without losing the respect or the companionship of the most refined and respected. Ann Bent and Harriet Ryan, — the one a shopkeeper and the other a hair-dresser — are instances within our own memory.

Many shops of the time, it is apparent, were large enough to require a corps of assistants, but it is not clear how far women were employed as such assistants. *The Mechanics' and Labourers' Guide to the United States*, published in 1840, stated that there were then "few if any females" employed as clerks in stores. Again, the biographer of Lucy Stone gives the following incident:<sup>31</sup>

When a merchant first employed a saleswoman, the men boycotted his store, and the women remonstrated earnestly with him on the sin of placing a young woman in a position of such "publicity" as behind a counter.

Yet other evidence points in the opposite direction. Some few women advertised for a position. *The American Herald*, (Boston) for example, for November 22, 1784, carried the following:

A Young Woman that understands tending a shop, writes a pretty good hand, and can be well recommended, would engage in that Business upon very reasonable Terms.

Inquire of the Printer.

Sometimes the employer advertised. In 1793, E. Oliver of Boston (sex unknown), concluded a notice of merchandize in the *Columbian Centinel* for May 8 as follows:

N.B. A young woman, capable of taking charge of the above shop or one that has attended in a shop of dry goods, may have generous wages by applying as above.

It may be recalled that Ann Bent started as an assistant in a shop in 1784.

It is probable that "female delicacy" was more regarded in 1840 than it had been a half century earlier. But Virginia Penny, writing in 1862 when it was still in full flower, gave the impression that a considerable proportion, — although much less than half — of the salespeople of her day were women. In beginning her discussion of "Mercantile Pursuits" she quoted with apparent agreement this statement by Mrs. Dall:

It is a singular fact that in England there are a great many more women in business for themselves than employed as tenders or clerks; while in America, the fact, at the present day, is exactly the reverse.

Later Miss Penny wrote:

In the United States, women are employed in a variety of stores; dry goods, lace and fancy stores are the most common. In Philadelphia they attend in nearly all the largest stores . . . ; besides, several hundred earn a subsistence as saleswomen in smaller stores. . . . Lady clerks usually receive from \$3 to \$8 a week. The best seldom receive more than \$6; while men receive from \$6 to \$12.

In Bangor and Belfast, Maine, and in Buffalo, New York, "of late years", Miss Penny added, women were customarily employed as clerks in stores.<sup>32</sup>

Some of Miss Penny's data regarding shop-keeping either as manager or assistant are worth quoting:

Many of the smaller fancy and variety stores in our cities are owned by women, that have by long-continued industry earned a competency. . . . In an Eastern city, two women stood in their father's store, and so learned the business. They married brothers, and each opened china stores, which they attended, while their husbands engaged in other business. They are both widows now, but have raised and educated their children. A son and son-in-law of one conduct the business. They are now in search of two intelligent young women, from fifteen to eighteen years of age, to grow up to the business. They require a little more readiness in arithmetic, tact, and general business qualifications, than are easily met with. From their experience they judge the employment to be healthy.

. . . A merchant, who employs saleswomen, told me he thought women have a better sense of propriety and are more particular than men, but they lack judgement and promptness. He thinks women do very well as far as they go, but there is a boundary line in ability, beyond which women cannot pass. The gentleman referred to was indebted to his mother, who had kept the store he then owned, for his education and position in business.

No comment was offered on the relation between this last statement and the gentlemen's opinion of women.

Miss Penny discussed nineteen kinds of shops under the heading of mercantile pursuits. She considered whether each type offered a good opportunity for women then, or might do so later. She took up the effect of each kind on health and comfort, noting too where the use of a step-ladder to reach articles on a high shelf would make the assistance of a boy necessary — for a lady's costume was not suited to climbing, and besides, someone might see her ankles! The impression is given that many women managed and worked in shops around 1860, and that the author believed that earlier in the century they had had rather more scope.

Nantucket Island is often referred to by writers on women's work, and Miss Penny claimed that during the Revolutionary War women conducted all the business there. This is no doubt an exaggeration, but certainly the island produced a number of active women.

Keziah (Folger) Coffin, a prominent merchant of the Revolutionary period, has become almost a legend. She was married in 1740, and her husband lived until 1788; she did not require the spur of widowhood to begin her extra-domestic activities. She and her husband had a house in the country, but she built one in town at her own expense, with a room with a bow window for a shop.<sup>33</sup> The author of *Talks about Old Nantucket* gives an amusing glimpse of her methods. An elderly friend of his

said that she well remembered going to this shop with her mother in the time of the Revolutionary War, when the island was reduced to great pecuniary distress. Aunt Keziah, a stately woman, would take down the goods asked for, name the price, — an exorbitant one which the purchaser could not or would not pay — then without a word she would quietly place the goods on the shelf again, knowing that she held a monopoly and that the people must go without or come to her terms finally.

Mrs. Dall wrote of post-Revolutionary days in the island:<sup>34</sup>

At the close of the Revolution there were in New England and perhaps further south, many women conducting large business establishments . . . The island of Nantucket was . . . a good example of the whole country. Great destitution existed on the establishment of peace. The men began the whale fishery with redoubled energy; some fitted out and others manned the ships, while the women laid aside distaff and loom to attend to trade. A very interesting letter from Mrs. Eliza Barney to Mr. Higginson gives me many particulars. "Fifty years ago," she says, "all the dry goods and groceries were kept by women, who went to Boston semi-annually to renew their stock. The heroine of 'Miriam Coffin' was one of the most influential of our commercial women. She not only traded in dry goods and provisions, but fitted vessels for the merchant service. Since that time, I recall near seventy women who have successfully engaged in commerce, brought up and educated large families, and retired with a competence. It was the influence of capitalists from the continent that drove the Nantucket women out of the trade; and they only resumed it a few years since, when the California emigration made it necessary. Five dry-goods and a few large groceries are now carried on by women, as

also one druggist's shop." . . . Mrs. Barney tells us that failures were very uncommon in Nantucket while women managed the business.

Two vignettes of Nantucket shop-keepers — women less striking but probably more typical than Mrs. Coffin, — may be quoted from J.E.C. Farnham's *Historical Data and Memories of My Boyhood*.<sup>35</sup> The first is based on his own recollection:

Eunice B. Paddock, a prim, quiet and polite Quakeress, had a very popular domestic small wares shop. Simply dressed in plain Quaker garb, she kept for sale goods of gay and attractive colors, which she well knew how to place and recommend in trade to her less exacting sisters. There mother used frequently to "send us on errands." Her store was "up Main Street," in a small one-room building, and there she sold "alpackers," "gingams," cotton cloth and prints by the yard, and other lines of dry goods. It was a variety store of merit, and there could be found thread, needles, pins, and small wares in general — in fact all those "little things" so much needed at home, which mother knew so well how to use.

The second portrait is in verse by Honorable Charles C. Van Zandt, one-time governor of Rhode Island:

#### POLLY TILLEY'S SHOP

I see it now, the little shop —  
So queer and old and quaint, —  
The iron latch, where eager hands  
Had rubbed off all the paint,  
The door, with glass in upper half  
That jarred and rang a bell;  
The little counter, with the rail  
That we remembered well.

It was bright as holly leaves,  
And on its dainty top  
The golden candy rested sweet  
In Polly Tilley's shop.  
The little shelves were filled with bowls  
Of herbs, and all the ills  
That Godfrey's Cordial left, were cured  
By Dean's Rheumatic Pills.

Some huckleberries, bathed in gin,  
And other doctor's stuff, —  
With two fat Quaker-colored jars  
Of Scotch and Yellow Snuff;  
A modest case of brass-knobbed drawers,  
All decked in living green,  
Were labelled Nutmeg, Cloves, and Spice,  
— Too precious to be seen.

And when the bell began to ring  
Out Betsey Stanley'd pop,  
With clean checked apron, to attend  
On Polly Tilley's shop.  
There peppermint and sassafras,  
And fragrant wintergreen  
And lemon, with a tawny stripe  
Deliciously was seen.

In shallow pans of unctuous tin,  
Worked with the tenderest care  
Molasses candy, flaxen links,  
Gleamed like Godiva's hair.  
Oh! Tom, this dizzy chase for fame  
And gold, we'd better drop —  
While memory points with lingering love  
To Polly Tilley's shop.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *"The Compleat Seamstress"*

"The lot of the needlewoman [is] almost equally dreadful, from the fashionable milliner down to the humble stocking-darner", Harriet Martineau declared in 1837.<sup>1</sup> In colonial times, sewing and garment-making had been largely done at home, and the occasional seamstress or dress-maker who worked by the day, usually among friends, did not present any problem. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, philanthropists became deeply concerned about the women who tried to support themselves by sewing.

Yet no other line of endeavor was regarded as so entirely women's proper field, and only in tailoring was there any real competition from men. Henry B. Fearon, in his *Sketches of America*, wrote of tailors' work in 1817, "a variable business, sometimes good employment, often not, it is a good deal in the hands of women". Lucy Larcom's recollections in *A New England Girlhood* further stress the role of women:<sup>2</sup>

My father had always strongly emphasized his wish that all his children, girls as well as boys, should have some independent means of self-support by the labor of their hands; that everyone should as was the general custom "learn a trade". Tailor's work, — the finishing of men's outside garments — was the "trade" learned most frequently by women in those days, and one or more of my elder sisters worked at it; I think it must have been at home, for I somehow or other got the idea while I was a small child, that the chief end of woman was to make clothing for mankind.

There were all varieties of tailoresses. Joseph Joslin, a teamster of Killingly, Connecticut, during the Revolution, mentioned in his diary an appropriately named one who

apparently worked expeditiously in her own house.<sup>3</sup> On March 16, 1778 he wrote: "was Cloudy Raine fogy I took my Cloath to Jane taylors to make a frock". He did not mention when he received the frock, but on April 30 he noted:

I took care of my horses and then I took my Cloath to Jane taylors for Some trowers and it was Cloudy and N. E. wind and Cooler I heard 2 perwinks and I have 17 horses at Knight I went after my trowsers

Many tailoresses went out by the day to the house of the customer. Several such are mentioned in the diary of Reverend Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Massachusetts. On February 24, 1780, he wrote: "Mrs. Lamson (wife of Mr. Thomas) comes to work on Elias's Cloths". Mrs. Lamson did not have a monopoly of working for Elias, for on July 24: "Miss Lois Burnett and her kinswoman (Henrietta) at work here again making Cloths for Elias".

Bentley's diary gives a portrait of a woman who evidently considered that even if nine tailors were needed to make one man, a tailoress was as good as the best. Under date of November 7, 1805, he noted the death of Elizabeth Matoon, of New Market, New Hampshire; her husband, who had died in 1800, had been an elder of the Tabernacle Church. Of Mrs. Matoon Bentley wrote:

She had been a woman taylor [sic]. Had a strong mind with violent religious prejudices which no circumstances could weaken. She scrupled not to say that her husband and son were in perdition, & she could hardly treat her benefactors with civility because they were not reconciled to God. She was the most rigid in her religious damnatory opinions who has ever fallen under my observation.

It is to be hoped that Mrs. Matoon had done her work at home.

In contrast to these work-by-the-day tailoresses, there were others who managed ambitious establishments. Many were widows. For example, the New York papers for May and June, 1792, carried the following:<sup>4</sup>

## The Widow CAMPION

No. 22, Water-street, opposite the Coffee-House, Respectfully informs her friends and the public in general that she carries on the Tayloring Business. She has employed Mr. Marshall, just arrived from London, who makes Ladies Habits and Coats, also Gentlemen's apparel, in the most elegant and newest fashion. She returns her sincere thanks to those gentlemen who have encouraged and favored her with their commands.

Then followed a list of "cassemere" and other "superfine cloths" which she had in stock.

If length of the advertisement is any indication, Mrs. Eliza O'Brien managed an important venture. In the *National Intelligencer* (Washington) for Jan. 4, 1821, she announced that she would continue the business of the late William O'Brien, merchant tailor, "at the usual stand above the corner of High and Bridge streets, Georgetown". She had an assortment of fall and winter goods to sell wholesale or retail; and she gave a list filling twenty lines of fine print. The card concluded:

She has on hand, and will constantly keep, a complete assortment of ready made Clothing, of every color, quality, and size, both for Gentlemen and servants. She has also children's and servants' Shoes, and children's furred morocco Caps and Hats.

She solicits the public patronage.

How far these women took part in the actual tailoring work it is impossible to say. Not so with the advertiser in the following card, found in the *Somerset* (Maine) *Journal*:

Tailoring.

MRS. A. DINSMORE

Wishes to resume her business in that line. Having been long confined by sickness, any favors in furnishing work will be gratefully received.

Norridgewock, Oct. 26, 1831

As Norridgewock was a small town where no address would be necessary, one cannot be sure whether or not she had a shop; evidently she did not have employees who could carry on the business in her absence. This is one of the very few bits of direct evidence which refer to time lost through illness, a factor always stressed in early discussions of needlewomen.

Women's clothing, then as now, kept many needles busy. Even in colonial days, the newspapers carried numerous advertisements of shops where the would-be fine lady could buy imported frills or could have them copied to her measurement and whim. After the Revolution these shops increased in number and variety.

Such a shop was advertised by "Mrs. Baylis, Mantua-Maker from London", on Hanover Street, Boston, in 1793. She made "morning Dresses, Italian Night-Gowns [i.e., evening gowns,] Louisa Habits, lappel Bishop's Robes, and every other kind of Fashionable Dress", and she constantly received the new fashions from London.<sup>5</sup>

Modish headgear was in equal demand. In 1793 Miss Lucy Richards sold imported millinery, and made hats and caps to order, at her shop on Cambridge Street, Boston. By 1795 she had moved to 47 Newbury Street. Marlborough Street, (like Newbury, a part of what is now Washington Street), was a favorite haunt of milliners.<sup>6</sup> Here was Miss Leverett at Number 56, and Miss H. Cruft at Number 29. Fanny Williams at Number 15 seems to have had a particularly imposing shop. The list of perfumes and hairpowder which she offered for sale is impressive, but she was primarily a milliner. Her advertisement for May 14, 1791 suggests that she catered to a fastidious clientele:

Ladies' Hats and Hat Tassels,  
just opened and to be sold by  
Fanny Williams,  
No. 15, Marlborough Street.

A large and elegant assortments of English and India Goods, — consisting of Ladies' cane, willow, straw, chip, and beaver *Hats*, Hat *Tassels* of various colours, a great

variety of *Necklaces*, *Ear-Rings*, and *Ear-Drops*, *Beads* of all colours, cap and hat *Wreaths*, *Flowers* and *Feathers*, *Sashes*, white & coloured, *Gloves*, *Fans*, black & white figured net *Gauzes*, plain and spotted do., a large assortment of handsome book, jaconet, mulled, painted, tamboured and laced *Muslins*, lawn and muslin *Handkerchiefs*, plain and needle-worked *Lawn* and lawn *Aprons*, *Muslinets*, *Mersailles Quilting*, *Chintzes*, & *Calicoes*, *Shawls*, Gentlemen's elegant *Tissue*, painted *Cassimeres*, *Jean*, striped toilenet, & figured waistcoat *Patterns*, figured and plain *Cravaths*, *Linens*, *Millenets*, *Russells*, *Shallons*, *Calimancoes*, *Tammies*, *Satins*, & *Everlasting*, & other articles too many to enumerate.

N.B. Millenary of every kind made in the newest manner, and upon the shortest notice.

Every town large enough to maintain a newspaper had women who inserted advertisements similar to these found in Boston. In 1793, Miss Marschalk, on William Street, New York, announced her stock of millinery imported from England and France, and "All orders in the Millinary Line thankfully received and executed with neatness and dispatch." S. Lloyd, on Great Dock Street, New York, called herself a milliner, but laid more stress on stay and mantua-making. M. Simson of Philadelphia, "tambour worker and embroidress", engaged to make ladies' gowns, scarfs, and shawls "with elegance and taste", and gentlemen's waistcoat patterns in gold, silver, and silk, "equal to any imported".<sup>7</sup> Her card for October 1, 1791, continued:

She returns her sincere thanks to the ladies of Philadelphia, South Carolina, and New-York for their kind patronage, and hopes by her steady attention to their commands to merit a continuation of their future favors and that of a generous public.

Young Ladies taught the above business; also plain work, Marking, Darning, and all kinds of Needle Work. Reading with propriety.

Either pupils were not forthcoming, or the "future favors" took up all her time, for the paragraph about teaching was soon dropped.

The curiously named A. Easter of Washington did "dress-

making in all its various branches, such as Dresses, Spencers, Pellisses, and Corsets," but in her advertisements for 1818 and after she laid most stress on "the Straw Business":

Ladies can have hats or bonnets made in the newest fashion. Bonnets or hats that have been worn the season can be bleached and remade to any pattern that will look equal to new.

In the same year, Mrs. Ann Hagerty of Washington, who had "just returned home" with the newest fashions — she did not say where she had got them — announced:

Leghorns and straw bonnets whitened in a superior manner, in consequence of a late addition to the former method.

For several decades, the sun-bonnet shape of straw was *de rigueur*; as it was not easily made at home, it formed an important article of commerce.<sup>8</sup>

In Hartford, Hannah Brown advertised the usual lines and also "the GLOVE-MAKING business," and that she would "engage to learn any young Lady the above business in three weeks at the modest price of Two Dollars." In Albany, Mrs. Crane's list of millinery carried the impressive parenthesis:

(to which she was regularly bred; having been favoured with the patronage of the first characters in New Jersey as well as N. York.)

Mary Mitchell of Norfolk added a postscript to her announcement of millinery: "Silk and cotton stockings engrafted in the best manner." And in Bath, Maine, and Louisville, Kentucky, Mary Tupper and Mrs. N. Phillips proclaimed in similar words their ability to execute any commission in the line of mantua-making or millinery.<sup>9</sup>

Mantua-making, it may be noted, had no reference to the Italian city. "Mantua" was probably derived from the French "manteau" or cloak; it came to mean first a loose gown, open to show the petticoat, and then any gown. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century practically all *modistes* were known as mantua-makers. A. Easter's advertise-

ment of 1818, quoted above, contained an early use of the term "dress-making", which gradually became customary.

A few women advertised specialized services in connection with clothing; two edifying cards may be quoted.<sup>10</sup> In 1792, E. Reed, lately from London, announced to the ladies of Boston that she was prepared to carry on the business of "mantua-making, Clear-Starching, and cleaning Gauzes," and that she had "opened and erected a *Machine* for the purpose of Glazing Gowns, Silk Stockings, Shawls, Waistcoats," and many other articles. Apparently she feared that Bostonians did not know the wonders of glazing, for she continued:

N. B. The nature of Glazing has this peculiar art in it, that it does in reality make a gown, petticoat, or piece of cloth (half-wore) appear to the eye as but lately bought from the shop, and the advantage derived from a glazed gown must be great to the wearer, as the gloss (with care) will keep beautifully on, a considerable time, and by that means will save the unnecessary trouble and expense attending a repeated washing.

Calendering is much the same as glazing. In 1803, Elizabeth Guy told the ladies of Baltimore that beside dyeing silks and calicoes, she would

have ready for business in a few weeks, a *CALENDERING* Machine of the same construction that she used in London; the invention of which procured Mr. Guy the Custom and patronage of the Queen, Princesses, and principal Nobility of England.

\* \* \* Specimens of its production may be seen by those who please to call.

A device to avoid "the unnecessary trouble and expense of a repeated washing" might have appealed to thrifty Queen Charlotte, as well as to some American ladies of the time.

The proprietors of fashionable shops represented the élite among needle-women, and Miss Martineau's comment, quoted at the opening of the chapter, is the only evidence noted to indicate that their lot was hard. The *Charleston Courier* for March 7, 1805, advertised that a business "particularly advantageous to a Milliner" would be sold for \$50.

Whether this sum would purchase stock is not clear; if it was for good will alone, it seems a good price for the time. Virginia Penny, writing in 1862, cited "Miss M, on Canal Street," New York, who started with \$20 capital, and after five years was worth \$3000; she was no doubt exceptionally fortunate. Miss Penny considered that a milliner who got "a good run of fashionable custom" could do well, and that a dress-maker who gained the reputation of being "a successful fitter and fashionable trimmer" was almost certain to make money.<sup>11</sup>

A few sketches of such shop-keepers appear in diaries and records of travel. Anne Royall described a twelve-hour journey from Baltimore to Philadelphia which gave ample opportunity to get acquainted with her fellow-passengers, among whom was Miss Alexander of Baltimore: "She is a native of Ireland, handsome and genteel. She is a milliner and was then on a journey to New York to lay in stock."<sup>12</sup>

A journey to New York in those days was no slight undertaking for a milliner from Baltimore, and one on the frontier would have found it impossible. Mrs. Basil Hall gave a glimpse of the way one in Louisville seized an opportunity to brush up on styles. Mrs. Cownie, it may be remember, was the Scottish nurse of Eliza Hall, aged two.—<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. Cownie and her little charge turned into a shop in search of something they wished to purchase. This proved to be a milliner's shop, and the old lady was so delighted with Eliza's frock . . . that she begged Mrs. Cownie as the greatest favour to let her see more of her dresses. Mrs. Cownie very good-naturedly returned home for three of the Child's prettiest frocks, and nothing could exceed the admiration, not only of the milliner, but of the numerous ladies whom she sent for to see these beautiful things. . . . Patterns were taken [from them]. . . . They had seen Basil and me walk past and the next petition was the loan of my bonnet to copy, a bonnet which I got the beginning of last summer, but the milliner says that a thing being made from an English pattern or what is worn by anyone well known gets sale so much better and sooner than on account of intrinsic value. . . . The visit ended by her requesting Mrs. Cownie to help herself to a

pair of gloves as a compensation for her trouble, which she refused, altho' she allowed Eliza to accept a little parcel of barley sugar kisses.

Miss Martineau found a woman whose methods were more original. In speaking of female pedants in America, she wrote:<sup>14</sup>

A literary and very meritorious village mantua-maker declared that it was very hard if her gowns did not fit the the ladies of the neighborhood. She had got the exact proportions of the Venus de Medici to make them by; and what more could she do?

Mrs. Trollope gave a pleasant picture of a young lady who mingled fashion and learning more successfully. Mrs. Trollope was not accustomed to meet a milliner socially, and she wrote with some surprise of an introduction to one in New Orleans,

in the very penetralia of her temple, standing behind her counter, giving laws to ribbon and to wire, and ushering caps and bonnets into existence. She was an Englishwoman, and I was told that she possessed great intellectual endowments, and much information. I really believe this was true. Her manner was easy and graceful, with a good deal of French *tournure*; and the gentleness with which her fine eyes and sweet voice directed the movements of a young female slave, was really touching: the way, too, in which she blended her French talk of modes with her customers, and her English talk of metaphysics with her friends, had a pretty air of indifference in it, that gave her a superiority with both. . . . I heard from many quarters, after I left New Orleans, that the society of this lady was highly valued by all persons of talent.

It was the only instance of the kind which she found, Mrs. Trollope admitted, but she concluded: "It is certain that if similar anomalies are infrequent in America, they are nearly impossible elsewhere".<sup>15</sup>

A few women attained notable success by developing a needle-work specialty. Mrs. Dall gave the story of a button factory in Easthampton, Massachusetts, which she visited in 1865.

This great industry was founded by a woman. . . . I found Samuel Williston . . . very willing to tell his wife's story if it would "encourage other women".

"My wife's father," he went on the say, "was a Mr. Graves. He was a poor man, with a large family of children. His wife and daughters used to go over to Northampton to get knitting from the stores. One day all the knitting had been given out; and Mrs. Graves showed her disappointment so plainly that the shopman asked her to take some buttons to cover. In those days, all the buttons came from England, where they were made by hand; but our tailor had got out, and wanted some for coats and vests in a hurry. Mrs. Graves made about a gross, all her daughters helping, and did it so well that the work was continued. Then my wife took it up. She got some of the work from her mother. That was in 1825-26, — forty years ago. I had invested in merino sheep, but I . . . found it hard to get along. It looked as though this business would help. My wife wanted to control the work. She hired girls to help her, and took all the orders that came. J. D. Whitney and Hayden & Whitney sold all she could make. When she had had the business a year, I went to Boston, Providence, Hartford, New Haven, New York, — in short, I went all around, — with samples. I got my orders at first hand, and from that the business began.

When we heard that machine-made buttons had been introduced into England, we sent over to buy the right to make them, and Mr. Hayden introduced them here.

"Every man must have his small beginning", added Mr. Williston, with an embarrassed blush, "but, when a man has such a wife as mine, he is lucky."<sup>16</sup>

The vogue of the straw bonnet, which has already been referred to, stimulated the inventiveness of a number of women. At first all good straws were imported, but several Americans acquired fame by finding ways to make them here. In 1789 Miss Betsey Metcalf of Dedham discovered how to bleach and braid meadowgrass and make it into bonnets; although she was only in her 'teens, she started a business and took pupils. It is doubtful, however, if her enterprise had much influence on the industry. The first woman to receive a patent in the United States, Mrs. Mary Kies, of South Killingly, Connecticut, obtained it for a way to weave straw

with silk and thread. Mrs. Madison wrote her a note of congratulation. Her method was not much used after 1819, however, — according to one writer, because of a change of styles.<sup>17</sup>

The disuse of Mrs. Kies' invention may have been due to a better method developed by another Connecticut woman. In 1819 Miss Sophia Woodhouse of Wethersfield was already attracting attention by her success in plaiting "grass bonnets", and in 1821 she too obtained a patent. Her method included a new treatment, which made possible the use of new types of grasses.<sup>18</sup>

The editor of *Niles Weekly Register*, always enthusiastic about anything which would encourage home industry, pounced on the discovery. A bonnet sent to London, he reported, had been awarded a premium of twenty guineas. In the issue for July 7, 1821, he quoted a London correspondent: "I cannot find a Leghorn hat in any of the shops equally fine and beautiful". The issue of August 4 reported that the manufacture of bonnets equal to Leghorns had been started in half a dozen places in this country. Common straw hats superior to the imported ones were said to have been made for some years in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and elsewhere, and premiums as high as \$20 were offered for the best examples by some agricultural societies in New York. Niles concluded:

It is a beautiful work for young ladies, and the time, perhaps, is near when they will take the same pride in displaying a bonnet made by their own hands as they do now in exhibiting their skill with the needle.

The next week, (August 11), the editor had a long article urging the tonic always required by an industry — a tariff. "As soon as the manufacture is a little farther advanced", he believed that a duty of 100% should be levied on imported Leghorns, — enough could soon be manufactured for the home demand, and perhaps an equal number could be exported. As yet, he said, it was only a small affair, — "it will not employ *many* thousand women and render them

comfortable, that now are idle, perhaps driven to crime for subsistence" — but home manufacture of bonnets could save at least \$500,000 from going out of the country, and if bonnets to an equal value were exported, the difference would be "more than \$2,000,000 per annum", beside the effect it would have upon the morals of society!

In January, 1824, Niles quoted at length from an article in the *Massachusetts Yeoman*, which referred to hats and bonnets of coarse straw, not the finer "Leghorn" variety made possible by Miss Woodhouse's invention. It stated that the manufacture of straw bonnets had been introduced from England about twenty years previously, and that the industry had done well until within two or three years: around 300,000 bonnets a year, at \$2.75 apiece, had been turned out, affording employment for 25,000 persons, "most of whom are females from *four* to twenty years".<sup>19</sup> (Italics not in original.)

Those employed in plating [sic] the straw have been enabled to support themselves, and in many instances to assist those of their immediate friends in destitute circumstances.

The price of a bonnet, the writer continued, had now dropped to \$1.25, and even at that price fewer were being sold. He blamed the trouble on the imported Leghorns, (which were preferred, he said, because they cost more!) and asked for a tariff. Apparently the *Yeoman* was not yet aware of the American Leghorn industry.

In July of the same year Niles expressed a good deal of irritation because the British government had laid a duty of \$13.25 a dozen on "imported straw imitation Leghorn bonnets". The case was peculiarly ungrateful, he felt, because an American — Miss Woodhouse — had taught the British how to make them. But by the following year — June 25, 1825 — Niles complacently noted that the home manufacture of straw and grass bonnets was rapidly driving imported goods from the American market. The native product was said to equal the imported, (Niles, indeed, never knew a contrary case) and to sell twenty-five per cent cheaper.

A few years later, Niles paid tribute to the bonnet industry of Boxford, Massachusetts. A supply had been sent to New York and there sold as English bonnets for \$12 to \$15 apiece:<sup>20</sup>

Then Boxford bonnets became in general request and the worthy females furnished them in sufficient quantities, 3 and 4 dollars being the fair price of an elegant and very superior article.

But Niles feared that when people realized that they were made in America, the demand would drop. He never missed an opportunity to attack the willingness to buy anything imported when a homemade article could be had, nor considered it possible that the imported goods were better. A notice in the issue for May 17, 1834, about a factory near Boston for "Tuscany straw bonnets" which employed one hundred and fifty to two hundred people, mostly women, concluded with the hope that the knowledge the bonnets were made in New England would not "render them less fashionable than they have been". He asserted that some ladies had rejected them because they were not expensive enough.

In October of the same year, the *Register* reported that the women of Franklin, Massachusetts, manufactured hats and bonnets to the value of \$75,000 to \$80,000 a year. The opinion was advanced that this line of work was the best paid occupation for women; some were made rich by "these beautiful manufactures, — so happily fitted for females". Public-spirited people were urged to provide more openings for women; straw and lace work was good, but not enough. It was admitted that many women worked for wages hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, and it was suggested that the most useful work would be of the kind which could be done at home, where children could assist. — Not quite a modern point of view.

A factory for Tuscan straw in Hartford, Connecticut, came in for commendation in December, 1835. Here, it was said, 100 women were employed, earning \$3 to \$5 a week, and

The young ladies in the factory are in fine health and manifestly enjoying a buoyance and elasticity of spirits to which less industrious females are strangers.

Niles' interest was primarily in increasing home manufactures, and whatever served that end was bound to be good in his eyes. In July, 1831, he had put a sting to the rather questionable statement that hundreds of young women and girls in Massachusetts earned \$1 to \$2 a day by plaiting straw for the young women and girls of the *nullifactory nation* who "don't do nothing at all". Sectional feeling ran high in 1831.

Niles was essentially the spokesman of "bigger and better America"; yet he faced and was distressed by the fact that some groups enjoyed little of the national prosperity.<sup>21</sup> In January, 1830, he noted with approval that a medal worth \$100 offered by Matthew Carey of Philadelphia had just been awarded to the Reverend Joseph Tuckerman for the best essay on the inadequacy of the wages generally paid to

seamstresses, spoolers, spinners, shoe-binders, &c., to procure food, raiment, and lodging; on the effects of this inadequacy upon the happiness and morals of those females, and their families, when they have any; on the probability that those low wages frequently force poor women to the choice between dishonor and the absolute want of common necessities.

Tuckerman, a Boston Unitarian well known for his work among the poor, gave fewer concrete cases in his essay than the historian would wish, but he wrote with evident care.<sup>22</sup> He limited his observations to Boston, which he admitted might have more unemployment than Philadelphia, and certainly more than rapidly growing places like Cincinnati; hence wages might be lower. In Boston, hundreds of women with families were then (1830) able to earn only \$1 to \$1.25 a week when fully employed. Meanwhile rents for the poor had not dropped in proportion to wages, and rooms at 50 cents a week were hard to find; the usual price was \$1. The keeper of a "slop-shop" (for inexpensive ready-made clothing) had told him that he often had to turn away fifty women

a day who were seeking work, making coarse shirts, labourers' frocks, or duck pantaloons, at 10, 8, and even  $6\frac{1}{2}$  cents apiece.

Carey, the donor of the medal, was almost as enthusiastic an advocate of protection as Niles. He deserves remembrance, however, for his activities to aid the poor, particularly poor women. He wrote numerous articles on the subject, and his conclusions about the wages of needlewomen parallel Tucker-man's. In *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia*, published in 1830, he stated that the government paid seamstresses who made army clothing — and they seldom had work more than eight months in the year — a wage of  $\$1.12\frac{1}{2}$  a week. Women who sewed at home he believed averaged the same amount when working, and he estimated that after they had paid rent, very few would have more than  $\$23$  a year to spend on food and clothing. Elsewhere he stated that "in four northern cities" there were some 18,000 to 20,000 women who if constantly employed for sixteen out of the twenty-four hours could not earn more than  $\$1.25$  a week.

Plenty of other observers give similar evidence. Dr. Harriet Hunt of Boston wrote in the same vein:<sup>23</sup>

Very early in my professional life my mind was attracted to the subject of remuneration for woman's labor; and their weeks, months and years of steady application, with results so saddening, forced me to earnest thoughts. I had an ample opportunity to investigate the position of women in this relation. "I have saved one hundred dollars," said a seamstress who had labored diligently for many years, "and this is only owing to my good health." "I have not one cent laid up," said another; "my board and clothing take all I can earn, for sick-headaches often keep me at home." "I was obliged, after my husband's death, to part with two of my children, so small is the pay I receive," said a third.

An incident told by Fanny Kemble (the British actress who married an American in 1834 and set up housekeeping near Philadelphia), points in the same direction, and helps to explain the situation.<sup>24</sup>

A young woman engaged herself to me, as lady's maid, immediately before my marriage; she had been a seamstress,

and her health had been much injured by constantly stooping at her sedentary employment. I took her into my service at a salary of £25 a year. She had little to do; I took care that every day she should be out walking for at least an hour; she had two holidays a week, all my discarded wardrobe, and every kindness and attention of every sort that I could bestow upon her, for she was very gentle and pleasant to me, and I liked her very much. A short time ago, she gave me warning; the first reason she assigned for doing so was that she didn't think she should like living in the country, but finally it resolved itself into this — that she could not bear being a servant. She told me that she had no intention of seeking any other situation, for that she knew very well that after mine she could find none that she would like, but she said the sense of entire independence was necessary to her happiness, and she could not exist any longer in a state of "servitude". She told me she was going to resume her former life, or rather, as I should say, her former process of dying, for it was literally that; she took her wages, and left me. She was very pretty and refined, and rejoiced in the singular Christian name of Unity.

It is no wonder that conditions among sewing women led to protests from workers. A beginning at unionizing the tailoresses of New York City was made as early as 1825, and in 1831, 1600 tailoresses and seamstresses went on strike for several weeks. In 1833 the journeymen tailors of Baltimore and in 1844 those of Boston aided the women of those cities in strikes. The Boston "standout" was large and apparently successful. Yet in 1861, Virginia Penny reported wages at just about the same level that Carey had found thirty years earlier.<sup>25</sup>

A different impression of the lot of sewing women is given, in an incidental way, by Anne Royall — usually an accurate observer. In commenting on the extreme industry of New-Yorkers, Mrs. Royall wrote:

I have known young ladies (those who have no dependence but their industry) since I have been in the city, sit up till 12 o'clock at night, to complete a suit of clothes, the proceeds of which was to purchase a fine cap, or a plume of feathers, to deck herself for church. Hundreds of those females thus

maintain themselves in a style of splendor; no ladies in the city dress finer; a ten dollar hat, a thirty dollar shawl, with silk and lace, is common amongst the poorer class of females. This keeps them employed; industry promotes virtue, and virtue promotes happiness.<sup>26</sup>

It need not be argued whether women receiving not more than \$1.25 a week to cover board and lodging as well as clothing would spend \$30 for a shawl. Either Mrs. Royall was totally mistaken, or there were some seamstresses, working by the piece in their rooms, who earned considerably more than what seems to have been the usual rate.

A sort of confirmation of Mrs. Royall's statement comes from an unintentionally amusing book called *The Boarding School; or Lessons of a Preceptress to her Pupils*, published in 1798. In this the "Preceptress" encouraged her pupils with little stories of success, in each of which the heroine put to good use her knowledge of a subject studied at school. The importance of needlework was illustrated by Clara; brought up in affluence, she suffered the loss of her fortune and was left a widow with four small children:<sup>27</sup>

In this exigence what was her resource? — She immediately summoned her resolution; and by the use of her needle has ever since supported herself and family with decency, and been highly respected for her prudent exertions and exemplary industry.

The portrait of Clara which forms the frontispiece depicts a young woman dressed in the height of fashion and luxury. No credence need be given to the artist's fancy, and not a great deal to the author's encouraging tale. But if it had been notoriously impossible for a seamstress to obtain a decent living, it seems improbable that the story would have been told.

Seamstresses who worked in private families were certainly numerous, but the information about them is scanty. Carey claimed that they fared much better than the women who took their work home. Milliners, mantua-makers, and tailor-esses (that is, needlewomen with special skill), he said, re-

ceived from 50c to 62½c a day, plus their food; and they usually ate with their employers — being in considerable demand, they were well treated. Ordinary seamstresses were relegated to the servants, and would not receive over 50c a day. Apparently they could not count on an average of more than half that amount, for, deplored the very hard lot of the woman who took her work home, Carey wrote:<sup>28</sup>

Is it not unjust and partial to the highest degree that a seamstress who works in her own room, and boards and lodges herself, cannot by any possibility earn more than one dollar and an eighth, or one dollar and a quarter a week, while she who works in other people's houses earns a dollar and half and her board?

Some families employed a resident seamstress. The *South Carolina State Gazette* for January and February, 1794, carried the following:

Wanted  
A compleat Seamstress,  
One properly qualified will meet  
with good employment by applying at the printing office.

Some idea of what constituted a "compleat Seamstress" may be obtained from an advertisement inserted in the *National Intelligencer* in July, 1818:

A Sempstress Wanted.

One who can come well recommended for orderly deportment and good temper as well as skill and experience in her business, may have a good situation and very good monthly wages, in a family residing on Capitol Hill, and may engage for a year at a time. She must be skilled in cutting out and making boys' garments as well as the common plain needlework of a family. None need apply but those who show unquestionable testimonials. Inquire of William A. Scott, on Capitol Hill, or Mrs. Ann Sawyer on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mrs. Sawyer ran a Washington boarding house.

These resident needlewomen seldom attracted the attention of the newspaper, the diarist or the traveler, and little

is known about them. Miss Martineau has given one choice sketch, however. After the anecdote of the mantua-maker who worked from the measurements of Venus de Medici, she continued:<sup>29</sup>

A sempstress was anxious that her employer should request me to write something about Mount Auburn (the beautiful cemetery near Boston.) Upon her being questioned as to what kind of composition she had in her fancy, she said she would have Mount Auburn considered under three points of view: as it was on the day of creation, — as it is now, —as it will be on the day of resurrection. I liked the idea so well that I got her to write it for me, instead of my doing it for her.

It is a pity that Miss Martineau did not give her readers the benefit of this essay.

Attempts have often been made, and still are made, to keep women out of spheres of labor which men consider more proper to themselves. The reverse has seldom been true, but it was undertaken by an anonymous writer, (apparently male) in the *United States Chronicle* (Providence) for June 16, 1791. In a long article called "The Propriety of Meliorating the Condition of Women in civilized Societies, Considered," the author argued that men who worked with the needle should be penalized:

There is no doubt but that the labour of any community, if properly applied, would support that community, and if it appears that any such labour could be better performed by women than by men, such labour should be allotted to the women. *Sedentary employment seems less injurious to the health of women than of men, and as women in general are less addicted to the vices of drunkenness and gambling, which makes so much havoc among tradesmen, and as they are more frugal and industrious, it is probable that many branches of manufacturing might be carried on by them with profit to themselves and benefit to their country. . . . I see no reason why an enlightened legislature might not grant them an exclusive privilege to that purpose, — at least, men might be prohibited from interfering in such branches unless they did it in women's clothing. . . . By rendering the women more independent we should also encourage matrimony as there is no doubt at all that a large majority of women*

who live in a state of celibacy continue in it through poverty, whereas if they could accumulate property through the exercise of some art, we should see the tables turned, they would marry and instead of men maintaining their wives and children, it would be at least in many instances, women maintaining their husbands and children. . . . As to what occupations would be properst for women, I mean not to insist; there is a large variety now engrossed by men which would be equally as well executed by the women. The whole business of making garments falls properly in the province of women, and I hope to see the day when a man would be as much ashamed to be caught exercising a needle as to be publicly detected in a woman's dress.

So far as known, no "enlightened legislature" has yet tried the means suggested for aiding one half of the citizens. Yet the arguments put forward are not much less cogent than those upon which some legislatures have acted in dealing with the work of women.

## CHAPTER IX

### *When Eve Delved*

The English colonists had disliked the idea of women's working out of doors, — except at a few "ladylike" tasks — and this prejudice continued and indeed increased.<sup>1</sup> In *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Margaret Fuller mentioned as allowable the cultivation of fruit and flowers and sometimes vegetables, and Lydia Maria Child wrote:<sup>2</sup>

Labor in the open fields and streets is rarely performed by women, unless it be by foreign peasantry lately arrived in the country. The buxom daughters of the Dutch farmers do indeed continue the old custom of raking hay, and the girls in Wethersfield, Connecticut, may often be seen at early dawn weeding the immense beds of onions, for which that town is celebrated.

Apparently vegetable-growing fell under the ban later, for in 1904 the historian of Wethersfield stated:

"The culture of the (onion) crop was once done mainly by women and boys, but the spectacle of women in the onion fields is now an unusual sight".

Onion culture by women had once been common, however, not only in Wethersfield. John Melish, an Englishman who travelled through the United States in 1807-08, spoke of the custom:<sup>3</sup>

We reached Wallingford, 26 miles from Hartford, about 12 o'clock. Here we had a delightful view and were informed that this district was celebrated for raising onions, and that a company of young girls had cultivated the root so successfully in a neighboring town, that they had built a church with the proceeds. This account of the industry of the young

women was highly gratifying, and we were really delighted with their blooming countenances, and the cleanly, substantial dress which they wore. It was plain and simple, but so much the better.

There were always some women who ignored the prejudice against outdoor work. *Niles Register* for August 17, 1833, recorded what must have been an unusual instance:

An old maiden lady of the name of Whitman of Mountjoy township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the eightieth year of her age, a few days ago mowed and made an acre of grass into hay.

Mrs. Dall gave some less spectacular cases:<sup>4</sup>

In Ohio, last year, about thirty girls went from farm to farm, hoeing, ploughing, and the like for  $62\frac{1}{2}$  cents a day. At Media, Pennsylvania, two girls named Miller carry on a farm of 300 acres, raising hay and grain, hiring labor but working mostly themselves. These women are not ignorant; they at one time made meteorological observations for an association auxiliary to the Smithsonian Institute. But labor attracts them, as it would many women if they were not oppressed by public opinion.

Mrs. Dall wrote about 1860, and perhaps these women do not fall within our period, but it is probable that the same sort of thing happened in earlier decades and that the same inference would be justified. Women of Mrs. Dall's day, as well as of the '30s and '40s, were encumbered by tight corsets and voluminous skirts, as well as by a tradition of fragility unfavorable to farm labor.

The frontier paid little heed to fashions, either in clothing or gentility, and without doubt plenty of pioneer women did literal yeoman service. But alas, they seldom interested the chronicler — if there was one. In a book called *The Adirondack, or Life in the Woods*, J. T. Headley gave a rare glimpse of such women.<sup>5</sup> He described a visit to a spot where a once thriving village had been abandoned, and continued:

Three thousand acres had been cleared up, which now lies a vast common with only one inhabitant to cultivate it. . . . The Robinson Crusoe of this little territory, he has what

he can raise and no one to dispute his domain. . . . Booneville, twenty miles distant, is the nearest settlement. Yet here he lives contented, year after year, with his family of thirteen children, — twelve girls and one boy — by turns trapping, shooting, and cultivating their fields. The agricultural part, however, is performed mostly by the females who plow, sow, rake, bind, etc., equal to any farmer. Two of the girls threshed alone, with common flails, *five hundred* bushels of oats in one winter, while their father and brother were away trapping for marten . . . Yet they are modest and retiring in their manners, and wild and timid as a fawn among strangers.

The mother, however, is the queen of all woodsmen's wives — but you must see her and hear her talk to appreciate her character. If she will not stump the coolest, most hackneyed man of the world that ever faced a woman, I will acknowledge myself to have committed a very grave error of judgement.

With this tantalizing hint, Headly left the subject.

The call to patriotic service in war went far to offset the usual prejudice regarding women's activities. Such service, and some doubtful stories of her adventures and extraordinary age, have kept alive the name of Ann Bailey, "the white squaw of the Kanawha".<sup>6</sup> It appears probable that she was born in Liverpool about 1742, and came to America in 1761. After her first husband was killed in 1774, she assumed male attire and became well known as a scout and messenger along the Virginia frontier; she was a good shot and horsewoman and an adept in woodcraft. In 1791 she relieved Fort Lee when it was closely beset by Indians and ammunition was running low, by riding alone 100 miles for powder. Later she moved with her son to Ohio, where she died in 1825 — at a ripe old age, even if not quite as ripe as legend averred. A petition for a pension having been rejected, she had eked out a rather poor living by raising fowl, which she carried on her back seven miles to market.

Mrs. Royall drew a candid portrait of her, written in 1823 or '24:

I have seen the celebrated heroine Ann Bailey, who richly

deserves more from her country than a name in its history,

This female is a Welsh woman, and is now very old. At the time General Lewis's army lay at the Point, a station on Kanawha River, Ann would shoulder her rifle and lead a horse laden with ammunition to the army, two hundred miles away, when not a man could be found to undertake the perilous task, the way being a perfect wilderness, and infested with Indians. I asked her if she was not afraid — she replied "No, she was not; she trusted in the Almighty — she knew she could only be killed once, and she had to die sometime." I asked her if she never met with the Indians in her various journeys (for she went several times). "Yes, she once met with two and one of them said to the other let us kill her, (as she supposed from the answer of the other) no, said his companion, God damn, too good a soger, and let her pass." But how, said I, did she find the way, — "Steered by the trace of Lewis's army, and I had a pocket compass too." "Well, but how did you get over the water courses?" Some she forded, and some she swam, and on others she made a raft. She "halways carried a hax and hauger, and she could chop as well as any man," such was her dialect. This is a fact that hundreds can attest. A gentleman informed me that while the army was stationed near the mouth of the Elk, he walked down the river to where it intersects with the Kanawha, for the purpose of fishing; he had not remained long there before he heard a plunge in the water, and looking up, he discovered Ann on horseback swimming toward him; when the horse gained the landing she observed, "cod, I'd like to a swum." She was quite a low woman in height, but very strongly made, but had the most pleasing countenance I ever saw, and for her, very affable. "And what would the General say to you, when you used to get safe to camp with your ammunition?" "Why he'd say, you're a brave soldier, Ann, and tell the men to give me a dram." She was fond of a dram. When I saw the poor creature, she was almost naked; she begged a dram, which I gave to her, and also some other trifle. I shall never forget Ann Bailey.

Even in Mrs. Bailey's lifetime a legend about her age gained currency. *Niles' Register* for October 19, 1822, quoted a "reliable correspondent" in Ohio who stated that she was twelve or thirteen years old at the death of Queen Anne, in

1714. Other "authorities" testified that her parents were people of means who gave her a good education; that she was kidnapped and taken to Virginia as an indentured servant; that in extreme old age she taught school, and finally that she possessed every virtue, including the domestic graces. The modern reader may like Mrs. Royall's sketch just as well; and it is more in accord with the known facts.

Although women's labor out of doors was frowned on east of the frontier, there was no hostility to a woman's supervising farm work, and in the South, many women carried on large plantations. Miss Martineau regarded it as almost the rule; a southern woman, she wrote,<sup>7</sup>

has her own property to manage. It would be a rare sight elsewhere to see a woman of twenty-one in her second widowhood, managing her own farm or plantation; and managing it well, because it has been in her hands during marriage.

This may be an exaggeration, but successful women plantation owners were certainly not rare. Elsewhere Miss Martineau wrote of planters' wives:

Some few of these ladies are among the strongest minded and most remarkable women I have ever known. There are great drawbacks, . . . but their mental vigor is occasionally proportioned to their responsibility.

Such a woman, apparently, was Rebecca Motte of South Carolina. She is chiefly remembered for her patriotism during the Revolution, when she encouraged the American troops to set fire to her house, which the British had made their headquarters; but her conduct after the war is of greater significance for this study. Her husband had died in 1780, leaving her with several young children, a large estate, and many debts. Far from selling the estate, she bought additional rice-land on credit, and her skillful management soon paid off the debts. At her death in 1815 she left a good property to her children.<sup>8</sup>

Catherine Greene, although of northern birth, also managed a southern plantation. Her husband General Nathaniel Greene, having incurred heavy debts during the Revolution,

settled at Mulberry Grove on Savannah River, on lands which the State of Georgia had given him in gratitude for his services. He soon died, however, leaving an involved estate and five small children for his widow to care for. Mrs. Greene is specially remembered for her association with Eli Whitney; it was while living as a guest on her plantation that he constructed the cotton gin. Some authorities claim, indeed, that Mrs. Greene herself furnished the ideas for the epoch-making invention, leaving Whitney to do the mechanical work, and then allowed him to patent it because it would have outraged opinion to have a woman appear as inventor. Just how much of the credit Mrs. Greene deserved is not certain, but it seems probable that she suggested Whitney's undertaking the experiment, and encouraged him in the process.<sup>9</sup>

The Marquis de Chastellux, who travelled extensively through the United States in the years 1780 and 1782, left sketches of two southern women whose ability impressed him.<sup>10</sup> The first was Mrs. Bowling, whom he called "one of the greatest landowners in Virginia and proprietor of half the town of Petersburg." On his way to her house, where he had been invited to dine, de Chastellux visited her tobacco warehouses, and noted that although the British had burned most of the tobacco,

Mrs. Bowling, by her interest had time sufficient to get it removed from her warehouses. She was lucky enough, also, to save her valuable property in the same town, consisting of a mill, which turns such a number of millstones, bolting-machines, cribbles, &c. and in so simple and easy a manner, that it produces above 800£ a year sterling.

Apparently American women had not made a very favorable impression on the Frenchman, for he wrote that Mrs. Bowling

has but little resemblance to her countrywomen; she is lively, active, and intelligent; knows perfectly well how to manage her immense fortune and what is yet more rare, how to make good of it.

He thought her about fifty years old, and gave a favorable account of her two children.

Of his visit to Mrs. Bird, widow of Colonel Bird and mistress of Westover, de Chastellux wrote:

She has preserved his beautiful house, situated on James river, a large personal property, a considerable number of slaves, and some plantations which she has rendered valuable. She is about two-and-forty, with an agreeable countenance and great sense. . . . Her care and activity have in some measure repaired the effects of her husband's dissipation, and her house is still the most celebrated, and the most agreeable of the neighborhood. [She had both been raided by the British, and subjected to annoyance from the local government on the ground that she had connived with the British.] . . . but she has braved the tempest, and defended herself with firmness; and though her affair be not yet terminated, it does not appear as if she was likely to suffer any other inconvenience than that of being disturbed and suspected.

. . . [A neighbor of Mrs. Bird's disapproved of slavery and was tempted to move to New England.] Mrs. Bird, who has a numerous family to provide for, cannot carry her philosophy so far; but she takes great care of her negroes, and makes them as happy as their situation will permit.

Many women land owners attract our attention only if they or their executors tried to sell their estates or if they advertised for a runaway slave or horse or wanted to rent out slaves. There was Mrs. Elizabeth H. Newman, for example, of Charles County, Maryland, with 750 acres of fertile land to sell, and an additional 290 acres, mostly wooded. And Mary Parsons, with two plantations, each of about 400 acres, one on either side of the south branch of the Potomac. The one on the north side, where she was living, contained apple and peach orchards, as well as corn land, and a comfortable house. Similar notices of sales, in which a woman is named as owner, are very common.

Southern newspapers carried many advertisements of thefts and runaways. Elizabeth Crab of Montgomery Court House, Maryland, offered a reward of \$20 for two missing mares, if the thief "is prosecuted to conviction", otherwise only \$6, or in proportion for one mare. Ann Dyer would pay \$10 to

\$40 for the return of her slave woman, depending on how far away she had got, — this was not the first time she had escaped. Identical notices by Mary Wilson of Gosport and by William Wilson, Jun., of Portsmouth, Virginia, forewarning "all persons from hiring or employing any of my Negroes without an order or applying to me for the same," suggest a family dispute. Similar brief glimpses of women who owned estates could be multiplied almost indefinitely;<sup>11</sup> but it is not always clear that the owner managed her property personally.

Northern as well as southern women managed farms. In 1783 Jacob Hiltzheimer, the Philadelphia diarist, made note of his visit to Mrs. McMaster to inspect hay, estimated at ten tons, for the use of the army.<sup>12</sup> The following advertisement, found in the *Salem Gazette* for February 14, 1791, described a good New England property:

To Be Sold By  
Sarah Fairfield  
Wenham  
THE FARM WHICH

she now occupies and the buildings thereon, situated between the Meeting House and the Pond, and very convenient for a Tavern. It consists of about 50 Acres of good Land, Mowing, Tillage, and Pasturage, and 14 Acres of Wood Land, and 3 Acres of Salt Marsh. Any person inclining to purchase, may depend on easy payments by applying to the above.

A similar tract was advertised in the *New Jersey Journal* for September 10, 1799. Sarah Williams wanted to sell a "valuable farm of about sixty acres", situated on the road from Rahway to Springfield, half a mile from Barnett's Mills. The soil was well suited to grass or grain, there was a good orchard and woodland, and a dwelling house, barn, chair-house, and corn crib.

A good many women performed what may be classed as agricultural work in connection with efforts to raise silk.

This now-forgotten undertaking spread like wild-fire over the United States in the 1830s and '40s. *Niles Register* for October 19, 1833, reported a successful venture by an unnamed young woman of Mansfield, Connecticut. Noticing a neglected mulberry orchard in a near-by town, she asked the owner for permission to use it; she agreed to furnish the worms and all the work, and to give him half the profits. For the first three weeks there was so little to do that she was able to do house-work in a neighbor's family, enough to pay for her own board and get some payment in work later. In this way she avoided having to pay any money for help. At the end of six or seven weeks she had fifty-four pounds of raw silk worth \$4 a pound, making her half (from which the cost of the silk worms was to be deducted, however,) \$108.

Mrs. Harriet A. Dinsmore of Ripley, Ohio, may have had mulberry trees of her own; at any rate she had land. A pamphlet published in 1842 under the title *The Silk Question Settled*, quoted her testimony:<sup>13</sup>

I was induced to commence feeding silk worms, as an employment better suited to my strength than taking care of a dairy. It also afforded a prospect of future useful and profitable employment for a family of small children.

She had been at work for three years. The second year did not turn out well — she thought the eggs were poor, and certainly the season had been unfavorable. But the third year had been so successful that her hopes were high.

This same pamphlet gave an account furnished by a fourteen-year old girl, Angela A. Bryant of Mansfield, Massachusetts, which shows what silk-raising involved:<sup>14</sup>

Summer before last I had given to me forty young silk worms. From the eggs procured in this way I had last summer between five and six hundred worms, which I fed mostly on the white mulberry. I lost but few by disease. They were fed five times a day, and the litter was removed every other day by taking them in the hand and placing them on fresh leaves. At thirty days of age they began to spin. There was much irregularity in the time of winding. From my six hundred worms I raised five pints of cocoons which I sent

to Mr. Hewins of Foxborough, Massachusetts. The product was 18 skeins of sewing silk. Of the expense I can say nothing, but I derived much pleasure from the care of my beautiful spinners.

An account of a more business-like venture is given in another pamphlet of the time. Harvey Clark of Mansfield, Connecticut, (Mansfields seemed to have an attraction for silk worms) reported that a half acre which he had devoted to mulberry trees gave enough leaves to produce thirty-five pounds of raw silk, which sold for \$4 a pound, plus the state bounty of \$.50 a pound. Mrs. Clark and a young woman who lived with them gathered the leaves and fed the worms for the first three weeks. Then for two or three weeks things became so lively that all Mr. Clark's time was needed as well. After that came the reeling which the two women did alone. As they also had to care for eight small children, their joint output of a pound and a half a day seems good.<sup>15</sup>

Another picture of a family enterprise, given in *The History of the Silk Dying Industry in the United States*, is based on the recollections of J. M. Grant, who had worked for Cheney Brothers from 1840 until his retirement in 1886. His apprenticeship to the silk industry was served under his mother in their home in Mansfield, Connecticut. He stated that when the mulberry trees began to leaf out, she moved the eggs — kept until then in a cool cellar — into a warm room, where they would hatch in two or three days. It took about six weeks to spin the cocoons. His mother then reeled the silk by hand and sold it, but she saved the waste to work up for herself. In the season, Grant remembered, the silk worms were everywhere; the work was all done in the kitchen, with the loom at one end and the "rather odiferous dye vats" at the other.

In spite of a high tariff on imported silk, generous bounties by the states, and immense enthusiasm, silk raising did not prosper long. A severe winter killed many of the mulberry trees; feeding the worms and reeling the silk was more exacting than had been realized, and there were more profitable

openings, even for the labor of women and children. The conviction slowly penetrated that better and cheaper silk could be imported; and the women who had fed silk worms returned to their dairying or entered the textile mills.<sup>16</sup>

To go back to land-owners. Joanna Burdett of Newark, New Jersey, apparently ran a farm and dabbled in real estate. In the *Centinel of Freedom* for October 7, 1800, she offered for sale a lot of one and seven-tenths acres, with two small houses on it, near the dock; and she advertised "a strayed middle-sized *Red Cow*, about five years old, with a wild look". Anyone furnishing information which led to the recovery of the cow would receive \$3 reward and the thanks of the advertiser. Apparently the lure was sufficient, for two weeks later Mrs. Burdett was still trying to sell the land but she was silent about the cow.

Another woman who combined jobs was Mary Talbot of Norfolk, Virginia. In January 27, 1801, she had two advertisements, one announcing a reward of \$5 for the return of a runaway slave named Sandy, and the other offering for rent the brick store occupied by Messrs. Allmand and MacGowan, and the brick dwelling house where Mr. Robert Gibson lived. In May another slave named Joe ran away; she considered him worth a \$10 reward.<sup>17</sup>

A fair number of women bought, sold and rented property. The executor of Ann Sophia Malcolm of Marblehead advertised in the *Salem Gazette* for October 5, 1790 the sale of the following, which was part only of the dead woman's estate — a house of two and a half storeys, another house of three storeys occupied by five tenants, a vacant lot near the center of the town, seven-eighths of a very desirable lot near the wharf, and two large lots at the back of the town.

Mortgages were in demand, then as now. The author of *Business Enterprise in the Revolutionary Era* mentions Mrs. Samuel Blowers of Boston as the owner of a valuable estate consisting of "houses, but chiefly of money lent on personal and real security".<sup>18</sup> Margaret Lydig of New York, widow, gave notice in *Greenleaf's New York Journal and Patriotic*

*Register* for April 12, 1794, that she was about to foreclose the mortgage for £300 made by Bernhart Alberty and his wife Catherine, in 1784, secured by six lots of land (totalling about 120 acres) in East Camp, Albany County; the sale would be held at the Tontine Coffee House on October 4, 1794.

According to Mrs. Dall, Mrs. Martha Hull Clark — mother of James Freeman Clark — made money by shrewd investments in land. She came of a wealthy family, but her husband was not successful and at his early death she was left in straitened circumstances. As the quickest way of supporting her children, she decided to open a boarding house; her social connections were no doubt an asset, and the enterprise prospered. Soon she was able to pay off a mortgage on a piece of property which she owned, and which she felt sure would increase in value. She proved correct, and sold this at the right moment, and the proceeds of this sale served to finance other purchases. Soon she gave up the boarding house and began to buy land, especially in Chicago and Milwaukee. She never bought any property without looking it over carefully herself.<sup>19</sup>

The Cabot family of Massachusetts owed not a little of its wealth to the competence of women. Joseph, youngest son of the pioneer John, became a prosperous merchant and ship owner in pre-revolutionary days, and at his death in 1767, he left most of his property to his widow for the care of their seven minor children. This widow, born Elizabeth Higginson, made over the house and shop in Salem to an older son and moved with the young children to Beverly, where she built a fine mansion, and invested widely in land. She died on the 25th of October, 1791, aged fifty-nine. Minor items in the inventory of her estate were a pew in the Beverly meeting house valued at 26 pounds, 13 shillings and 4 pence, and a share in the Salem Social Library. Her jewelery was worth only 4 shillings and 7 pence, but she had silver plate to the value of £47. The chief item in the account, however, were bonds and notes to the amount of £7399. The total

estate came to just under £10,000, a very fine property for those days.<sup>20</sup>

A daughter-in-law of Elizabeth Cabot, Lydia Dodge Cabot, had a similar career. When her husband Andrew died in 1791, he left nine children under seventeen, the youngest a baby six days old. All his considerable estate he bequeathed to his widow. She gave notice in the *Salem Gazette* for January 10, 1792, that she had been appointed executrix, and "had taken upon herself that trust," and that she would sell a large mansion and two other houses in Beverly, a good house in Haverhill,  $6\frac{3}{4}$  acres of land in Salem,  $1/48$  part of the Kennebec purchase, some lots in Raymond township, a good farm of 300 acres in Moultonboro, New Hampshire, more than 2,000 acres in Middleton and New Durham, and a valuable estate of over 3,000 acres in Wolfboro, formerly the property of Governor Wentworth. If this last was not sold, she would let it, to one, two, or three tenants, complete with stock and tools.

This looks as if she was overwhelmed with her responsibilities, but if so, she soon gained courage. The next year she bought back  $1/48$  part of the Kennebec tract for £500, and also two tracts of the Wentworth estate in Wolfboro. In 1794 she paid £240 for some land and buildings in Beverly. Some time around 1795 she and her children moved to Boston, where she died in 1807.<sup>21</sup>

The Kennebec tract and the Wentworth estates were instances, common throughout early American history, of large holdings of land given or sold cheaply to persons who had won the gratitude of British proprietors or of American legislatures. Although seldom the original grantees, women often figured as owners of such lands.

A *cause celebre* of New York State in the early 1830s centered around the efforts of Martha Bradstreet to maintain her rights as inheritor of proprietary lands in Utica. Mrs. Bradstreet was born in Antigua in 1780, the daughter of Major Samuel Bradstreet, and in 1799 she married an Irishman named Matthew Codd. They soon went to Utica, of which

Mrs. Codd's grandfather General John Bradstreet had been a proprietor. Codd proved an unsatisfactory husband and after a few years his wife got a divorce, and — understandably enough — resumed her maiden name, although she kept her married title.

In the course of time Mrs. Bradstreet inherited a claim to a considerable share of General Bradstreet's lands under the wills of two aunts. The executor of one of these wills had sold large portions of land — illegally, as Mrs. Bradstreet claimed. The growth of the city had made the grant very valuable, and his granddaughter sued thirteen individuals in Utica to recover what she regarded as her just inheritance. *Niles Register* for October 1, 1831, reported that much agitation had been aroused by the suit, especially because three hundred and twelve people, most of them from Albany, had been called as "recognitors", and they were not sure that they would be paid for their time and expenses.

Niles' informant wrote that Mrs. Bradstreet had appeared in court and argued her own case with great ability and eloquence; it was the common remark of those present "that Mrs. Bradstreet was the best lawyer who spoke on the occasion". If she wins, the correspondent added, she will be one of the richest people in the United States.

The *Memorial History of Utica* characterized her thus:

Mrs. Bradstreet was a woman of vigorous natural talents, masculine in features and in temperament, although not without considerable of the refinement and bearing of a lady. Acquiring by study a mastery of the law of real estate, she was a host in herself; but she enlisted in her aid some of the ablest counsel of the state.

Nevertheless, she lost her suits.<sup>22</sup>

Niles reported the story of another woman who was more successful in her land holdings. Mary Jennison was born at sea of Irish parents in 1742 or '43. Her family settled on the Pennsylvania frontier, and in 1755 all but Mary were killed. She was adopted by the Indians, and married a Delaware Indian, and after his death a Seneca chief. She accepted the

Indian religion but kept up her command of the English language. When the Seneca Indians made a sale of their lands to Robert Morris in 1797, they reserved a tract for her which Morris understood to be of some two or three hundred acres. Mary had fixed the bounds shrewdly, however, and it really amounted to almost 10,000 acres. She worked this estate and became rich. She was benevolent and did much good, especially to the Indians, among whom she was highly respected. She had seven children, of whom one son became a naval surgeon. Mary died around 1825 or '30.<sup>23</sup>

The western frontier produced hardy women, able to turn their hands to the plow or to the shotgun as need arose. But plowing did not greatly interest the occasional chronicler, and only something quite out of the ordinary has preserved the names of a few of these Amazons. There is no real evidence that the following Amazon was a farmer, but no other calling seems to fit the case. It is not surprising that she impressed Henry B. Fearon, the English traveler, who quoted this announcement from the *Kentucky Reporter*:<sup>24</sup>

#### TAKE NOTICE

And beware of that swindler JESSE DOUGHERTY, who married me in November last, and some time after marriage informed me that he had another wife alive, and before I recovered, the villain left me, and took one of my best horses — one of my neighbors was so good as to follow him and take the horse from him and bring him back. The said Dougherty is about forty years of age, five feet ten inches high, round shouldered, thick lips, complexion and hair dark, grey eyes, remarkably ugly and ill-natured, and very fond of ardent spirits, and by profession a notorious liar. This is therefore to warn all widows to beware of the swindler, as all he wants is their property, and they may go to the devil for him after he gets that. Also, all persons are forewarned from trading with the said Dougherty, with the expectation of receiving pay from my property, as I consider the marriage contract *null* and *void* agreeable to law; you will therefore pay no attention to any lies he may tell you of his property in this country. The said Dougherty has a number of wives living, perhaps eight or ten, (the number

not positively known,) and will no doubt, if he can get them, have eight or ten more. I believe that is the way he makes his living.

MARY DODD

Livingston County, Kentucky. Sept. 5, 1817.

Kentucky widows must have been singularly unexacting.

Although the evidence presented in this chapter is fragmentary, it shows that there were women who managed their farms or plantations, and others who dealt in real estate. In *Colonial Women of Affairs* the guess was hazarded that more women made an independent contribution to American life through their management of land than in any other way.<sup>25</sup> This may well have been true in the post-Revolutionary period also.

The United States was predominantly a nation of farmers until long after 1840; yet the farmer has been generally neglected by historians. Indeed, a recent writer calls it "at once astonishing and depressing" that the history of agriculture should have received so little attention.<sup>26</sup> It is scarcely to be wondered, then, that the achievements of the woman farmer of a century ago — whatever they may have been — are veiled in obscurity. From the days of Horace down, there have been poets and chroniclers to sing of arms and the man; but few have celebrated the spade, the milking-stool, and the woman.

## CHAPTER X

### *And When She Span*

The making of cloth has been woman's work since time immemorial, and in colonial days the housewife, her daughters and her servants spun and wove flax and wool, just as their foremothers had done for centuries. The well-to-do bought English cloth for their best clothes and furnishings, but the great bulk of the fabrics in use were the product of household industry; and spinning and weaving, far more than reading and writing, were the accomplishments of every properly brought up girl.

A few woolen "factories" — shops where a group of people worked together with the usual hand wheels and looms — had been set up during the colonial period. They had been hampered by British disapproval, and independence brought an eager desire to advance such enterprises. At about the same time came knowledge of new inventions — the spinning jenny and the mule, and somewhat later the power loom, run usually by water power. These were developed in England in the years following 1764 and were applied first to cotton, hitherto regarded as a luxury. Most of that in use was imported from India, for western fingers found cotton harder to manipulate than wool or flax. As soon as the new inventions made it cheap, however, cotton cloth began to supplant linen for most purposes; but for a generation or more after the cotton mill was well established, wool was still produced by the old home methods. Development in America followed about the same course as in England, but it came twenty or thirty years later.<sup>1</sup>

Several communities claim to have had the first textile mill in this country, and in every case women were active in one role or another. Apparently the honor of priority belongs to Beverly, Massachusetts, where a mill was established in 1787. Among the twelve responsible capitalists was Deborah Cabot, who owned two shares. These adventurers, as they were called, stated in their petition for incorporation: "It [the mill] will afford employment to a great number of women and children, many of whom would otherwise be useless if not a burden to society."<sup>2</sup>

At about the same time a cotton mill run by mule power was being operated on James Island, near Charleston, South Carolina, by a Mrs. Ramage. The *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* of Charleston for January 24, 1789, spoke enthusiastically of her example, which it hoped would be followed so that "in a few years the importation of manufactures may be almost unnecessary." No further information about this enterprise, unfortunately, has been found.<sup>3</sup>

Another early venture was a "duck factory" (to make sail cloth) in Boston, on land owned by a Mrs. Pecker. During his journey through New England in 1789, Washington visited both the Beverly and the Boston plants, and he described the latter in his diary for October 28:

Went after an early breakfast to visit the duck manufactory, which appears to be carrying on with spirit and is in a prosperous way. They have manufactured 32 pieces of Duck of 30 or 40 yards each in a week; and expect in a short time to increase it to . [sic] They have 28 looms at work, and 14 girls spinning with Both hands (the flax being fastened to their waste.) Children (girls) turn the wheels for them, and with this assistance each spinner can turn out 14 pounds of Thread per day when they stick to it, but as they are paid by the piece or work they do, there is no other restraint upon them but to come at 8 o'clock in the morning, and return at 6 in the evening.

The factories so far named were all short lived, but better fortune attended the beginnings in Rhode Island. The first spinning jenny constructed in the United States is said to have

been made in 1786, by Daniel Anthony, Andrew Dexter, and Lewis Peck, of Providence. In 1788 Anthony's sons Joseph and Richard experimented with a spinning frame for which "the cotton was carded by hand and roped on a wooden wheel, by a female." But the resulting yarn proved uneven, and they soon sold their frame to Moses Brown. The next year Brown obtained the services of Samuel Slater, an Englishman who understood the new machinery, and in December, 1790, they started in Pawtucket what proved to be the first successful textile mill in this hemisphere. Eunice and Ann Arnold, girls of about twelve years old, were among the earliest employees, and the work sheet shows that they were busy six days a week, Christmas and New Year's not excepted. Slater's American wife, Hannah Wilkinson, is credited with discovering how to replace the customary flax sewing thread with a satisfactory one made of cotton.

For a number of years, it should be noted, the Pawtucket mill was for spinning only. At first the thread was let out to women for bleaching and weaving, which they carried on with the time-tested help of sun and water out of doors, hanging the skeins on sticks stuck in the ground. After some years, more modern bleaching methods, and weaving machinery, were added to the original spinning plant.<sup>4</sup>

The claim of Massachusetts to be first with a power loom for weaving is generally acknowledged, — indeed, the one set up at Waltham in 1814 is said to have been the first place in the world where every process of cloth-making was carried on under one roof. There the employers, led by Francis Cabot Lowell, made a determined effort to avoid the dangers which had been exemplified in English mill towns. After Lowell's death his associates applied the same principles in the better known textile city which they named "Lowell" in recognition of his influence.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Slater mill held its own, the number of factories increased very slowly until about 1807, when the Jeffersonian Embargo and later the War of 1812 stimulated rapid expansion. The 4000 spindles listed in 1805 had

multiplied to 87,000 by 1810, and to 800,000 by 1825. Factories spread through the middle states and a few were set up in the South. But New England remained in the lead; it had 60% of all mills in 1836.

Mill workers were predominantly women and girls. Figures for 1831 gave the employees in cotton mills as 18,059 men and 33,506 women, and the proportion of women rose slightly in the following decades. In some mills it ran a good deal higher, the women outnumbering the men in Lowell in 1839 more than three to one.<sup>6</sup>

Woolen mills using power machinery were started at about the same time as cotton mills, but it took longer for them to become successful. It is said that in 1810, twenty-four out of every twenty-five yards of woolen cloth was made at home. The trouble was that the available wool was so poor that the output of American mills was much inferior to imported goods; and since women could still make common cloth at home, they did not care to buy anything except a good quality. Following 1810, merino sheep were brought into the country, to the great benefit of the domestic supply of wool; and by 1830 woolen manufacturing was well established.<sup>7</sup>

Fewer women were employed in woolen mills, however; the work was considered too heavy to be as well done by women as by men. Jedediah Tracy of Troy, New York, who had a cotton mill and was about to start one for wool, expressed the employer's point of view bluntly:<sup>8</sup>

The wool business requires more man labor and this we study to avoid. Women are much more ready to follow good regulations, and are not captious and do not clan as the men do against their overseers.

The situation was reversed in silk mills. The work, which one mill girl described as "too puttering" for her, was better suited to women than men, and in the decade of the 1830s particularly, many women were employed on it. According to *Niles Register*, the Montogul Mill, started in Boston in 1831, had three hundred female operatives by 1835, turning out Tuscan braid, gimp, and ribbons. There were several

smaller factories in Connecticut. Three in Mansfield, employing six males and twenty-four females, produced \$25,000 worth of sewing silk in 1839. One in Manchester — no doubt that of the Cheney Brothers, one of the few firms which weathered the hard times just ahead — employed five males and fifteen females, and had a gross output of \$10,000 of manufactured silk. A writer of 1887 listed thirty-nine separate silk-manufacturing concerns which had been in existence between 1829 and 1839, and he believed that a good many others had eluded his search. Most of these perished soon after 1839.<sup>9</sup>

Beside the regular cotton, woolen, and silk mills, some specialty plants were set up — for carpets, lace, linings, and so forth. Benjamin Shepard of Wrentham, Massachusetts, had a small mill in which he made fustian, cotton velvet, and similar goods. His wife Susannah, reported to have been "a woman of exceptional enterprise and capacity for business," took yarn and waste from the mill and worked them up on her own account. A contract survives which she made with Stephen Olney of Providence, for a coach which he was to build for her. She would furnish the harness, wheels, lining, and leather for the top, and for the rest she was to pay him in goods, figured at wholesale prices, as follows:<sup>10</sup>

5½ yards thickset at 4 shillings, 8 pence	£1	5s	8d
2¾ yards satin-bever at 4s, 8d		12	10
2½ yards velveret, at 4s, 8d		10	8
1 yard and 2 nails of carpeting at 3s		3	4½
13 yards carpeting at	1	18	7½
2 handkerchiefs		7	0
	£4	18	2

A nail, it may be explained, is a unit of cloth measurement equal to 1/16 of a yard, or 2½ inches. There were certainly no round numbers in this transaction.

A "lace school," or factory, at Newport, Rhode Island, attracted considerable attention. A writer in the *Salem*

*Register* claimed, however, that "only the working or ornamenting of the manufactured article" was done there, and that Ipswich, Massachusetts, contained the "only establishment in the United States in which the article of lace is manufactured from the thread." Each of these factories was said to employ about five hundred young women.<sup>11</sup>

In considering wages and conditions of work in these infant factories allowance must be made for differing conditions from year to year and from mill to mill. Still more, the modern reader must be on guard against interpreting the situation according to modern standards. Take the matter of hours, for example, on which the evidence is unanimous. Unless work was slack, everyone worked twelve or twelve and a half hours a day — sometimes more — for six days a week. But no one considered this oppressive. As a mill girl testified in 1850: "The majority would not be willing to work less if their earnings were less."<sup>12</sup>

What were these earnings? Harriet Hanson Robinson, who started as a "doffer" in the Lowell mills at the age of ten, and who wrote one of the best accounts of early mill life in New England, stated that many factory girls earned \$6 to \$10 a week,<sup>13</sup> but other evidence indicates that this was above the average. For example, *Niles Register* for September 21 and October 5, 1833, reported as rather remarkable two instances of high wages: in one, "a young lady working at the Anawan manufactory at Fall River" received an average of \$9.25 weekly during the month of August; and the other, the pleasantly named Roxana Love, of Killingly, Connecticut, received \$9.45 for one week's work — 1575 $\frac{3}{4}$  yards of 37 inch sheeting. But as Roxana's output of about 800 yards per week for three other weeks is mentioned as high, it would appear that this amount was very unusual.

A few years later Niles gave the average wage of females, "clear of board," in the Lowell mills as \$2.00 a week, that of men as 80 cents a day. This was in 1839, and the Panic of 1837 may have depressed the rate. Yet, adding the customary \$1.25 for board, it is in line with much other evidence. Wages at

Waltham, for example, are given as \$2.75 to \$3.25 a week. On the other hand, Alice Henry, author of *The Trade Union Woman*, considered that wages of \$2.50 were "rarely exceeded." A writer in *Niles Register* for October 8, 1825, covered the situation thus: women in factories earned from \$1.25 to \$4.00 a week on piece work, "according to capacity and employment." He added that attending the loom was their most profitable business.<sup>14</sup>

Statements of the ratio of women's wages to those of men also vary considerably. A writer in *The Workingmen's Shield*, Cincinnati, for January 12, 1833, claimed that women received only twenty-five per cent as much as men. A Massachusetts woolen manufacturer, on the other hand, testified in 1828: "If I hire females to weave, I pay 83 cents for what I pay men \$1." Others evidence indicates that women in factories generally received one-half to three quarters as much as men.<sup>15</sup>

The employers, naturally perhaps, had no doubt that the wages were entirely adequate. As one put it:

Multitudes of women and children have been kept out of vice, simply by being employed, and instead of being destitute, provided with an abundance for a comfortable subsistence. . . . It is believed that there may be found more young men and women, who have laid up a few hundred dollars, or even a few thousands by being employed in manufacturing establishments than among those who have followed other employments.

Samuel Slater's brother-in-law, Smith Wilkinson, manager of a mill in Pomfret, Connecticut, wrote in the same vein:

The disposition of females to dress more extravagantly is marked at first but it soon abates. They save money. A great many have saved two or three hundred dollars in three or four years, and are enabled to fit themselves out decently when they marry.

The figures given may be taken with a grain of salt. But Dickens reported that in Lowell, in July, 1841, 978 factory girls had savings accounts in the local bank which totalled

about one hundred thousand dollars, an average of over \$100.<sup>16</sup>

It must of course be borne in mind that expenses were low and standards modest, and a dollar went much further than today. For example, the richest young lady of the time (apparently about 1840), the daughter of a deceased mill-owner, is said to have had an income of \$600!<sup>17</sup>

Conditions of work in the early mills were generally regarded as satisfactory. Mrs. Robinson explained the situation thus:<sup>18</sup>

Help was too valuable to be ill-treated. . . . Except in rare instances, the rights of the mill-girl were secure. They were subject to no extortion, and if they did extra work they were always paid in full. Their own account of labor done by the piece was always accepted. They kept the figures and were paid accordingly. Though their hours of labor were long, yet they were not overworked. They were obliged to tend no more looms and frames than they could easily take care of, and they had plenty of time to sit and rest. . . . They were not driven. . . . They were treated with consideration by their employers, and there was a feeling of respectful equality among them.

This testimony is amply corroborated. Helen L. Sumner, after a careful study of the evidence, stated<sup>19</sup>

Until about 1836, for example, a girl weaver tended, as a rule, only two looms, and if she wished to be absent for half a day, it was customary for her to ask two of her friends to tend an extra loom apiece so she should not lose her wages. By 1876 a girl tended six and sometimes eight looms.

Roxana Love's record-breaking achievement in 1833, cited above, was made on six looms, whereas her output of 800 yards a week was done on three looms.

The claim was often made that mill work was beneficial to the health. In the article on the Lowell mills in *Niles Register*, already cited, one reads:

As regards the health of persons employed, great numbers have been interrogated and the results show that six of the females out of ten enjoy better health than before being em-

ployed in the mills; of males one-half derive the same advantage.

Charles Dickens pronounced the girls of Lowell "healthy in appearance, many of them remarkably so"; and Harriet Martineau (always critical of the health of American women) said of the Waltham mill girls, "Their health is good; or rather (as this too much to be said about health anywhere in the United States) it is no worse than it is elsewhere."<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, there is evidence on the other side. Reverend William Scoresby, an Englishman who published his observations in 1845 under the title *American Factories and Their Female Operatives*, paid tribute to the neatness and good manners of the mill girls but thought them "more pallid than the factory girls with us." And a letter of Charles W. Eliot's preserves a similar comment:

Grace [Mrs. Eliot] was reading me a day or two ago an extract from a letter of her father, written shortly after he went to live in Lowell as a young lawyer at some time in the 1830s. He described the aspect of the factory girls of that day who often worked in the mill from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. with recesses which amounted to an hour. He pointed out how destructive the method was to the health and vitality of the girls. This was the Lucy Larcom time.

Lucy Larcom herself had admitted finding the confinement and the noise oppressive.<sup>12</sup>

The great majority of contemporary observers, however, commented favorably on the appearance of the workers.<sup>22</sup> English visitors, aware of the depressing conditions in their own country, were among the most enthusiastic. During his American tour of 1842, Charles Dickens visited a cotton and a woolen mill and a carpet factory in Lowell and became lyrical in their praise.

The girls . . . were all well dressed; and that phrase necessarily includes extreme cleanliness. They had serviceable bonnets, good warm cloaks, and shawls; and were not above clogs and pattens. . . . The rooms in which they worked were as well ordered as themselves. In the windows of some, there were green plants, which were trained to shade the glass; in

all there was as much fresh air, cleanliness and comfort, as the nature of the occupation would possibly admit of. [There must have been some, he realized, who did not have good health.] But I solemnly declare, that from all the crowd I saw in the different factories that day, I cannot recall or separate one young face that gave me a painful impression; not one young girl whom, assuming it to be a matter of necessity that she should gain her daily bread by the labour of her hands, I would have removed from those works if I had the power.

Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist, visited Lowell a few months before Dickens; his comments were more restrained, but similar. He noted the attractive and neatly dressed young women, "chiefly daughters of New England farmers, sometimes of the poorer clergy." The work, he said, was regarded as more "eligible" than domestic service, and the moral character of the workers was very high. This statement echoes Washington's description of the girls in the Boston duck factory: "They are the daughters of decayed families and are girls of character — none others are admitted."<sup>23</sup>

Washington's aristocratic point of view must have prompted the reference to family decay, but there is not a dissenting voice as to the good reputation borne by mill girls.<sup>24</sup> *Niles Register* of September 9, 1826, in a long account of the Waltham factory, emphasized this point:

In 1825 there was [sic] about 400 girls employed in it. These girls were generally the daughters of farmers in the neighboring country; they earn more money in the cotton mills than they could elsewhere. Many marry; when this takes place they leave the establishment. When the business commenced at Waltham, the girls were made to understand, that the slightest suspicion entertained of the regularity of their conduct would be ground for dismissal and that public opinion in the society must constitute its law. That if a female was found in company with a man at an unseasonable hour she would be discharged without further inquiry or proof. Upon one occasion a girl fell under suspicion of having violated this rule: her companions instituted a complaint against her: she came to the superintendent with tears in her eyes averring her innocence: he told her he was sorry

for her case, if such was the fact, but there was no help for it. Down to the time mentioned in 1825, in a society of 400 girls, but a single case of gross misconduct ever came to the knowledge of the managers of the institution. Surely, without vain boasting, our country may be proud of a fact like this.

Three hundred and ninety-eight girls, in other words, fit to be Caesar's wife!

Accidents were very rarely chronicled; perhaps they were considered too trivial to mention. *Niles Register* for October 19, 1833, quoted without comment the report of an unpleasant one in the *Kinderhook Sentinel*:

Miss Van Buren, in the factory of Mr. Baldwin, threw her hair back and it caught in a shaft. . . . she grasped it with her hands but after two or three revolutions she was thrown and her scalp torn off. Doctors were called . . . she is now doing well and it appears her scalp will grow on again. She did not lose consciousness or presence of mind at any time. She seemed only to feel the blow on her head from the fall.

When the slavery controversy had become embittered, Southerners were fond of pointing to northern mill girls as worse off than their Negroes. This charge need not be taken seriously. Yet a story appeared in *The Voice of Industry*, (a labor magazine,) for 1846, about country girls, lured with exaggerated stories of high wages, being transported to the mill in enclosed wagons known as "slavers." The driver of the wagon, it was said, received a dollar apiece for his recruits, and more for girls from a considerable distance — because they would find it harder to go home.<sup>25</sup>

One instance has been found of the girls referring to themselves as slaves. A strike occurred in Lowell in 1836, because the price of board was raised from \$1.25 to \$1.37 a week, and the strikers paraded, singing:<sup>26</sup>

Oh, isn't it a pity that such a pretty girl as I  
Should be sent to the factory to pine away and die?  
Oh! I cannot be a slave,  
For I'm so fond of liberty  
That I cannot be a slave.

The cost of board has already been mentioned. The question where to board must have been important, but it seems to have caused little trouble. Many of the mills were set up beside a small waterfall where there had been nothing more than a hamlet; and the corporation had to build a village as well as a factory. Even where the mill was located in an existing town, a large proportion of employees came from too great a distance to permit their living at home. Some of the early mill tenements — "barracks of boarding-houses," as a visiting Frenchman called them, — still survive, most unattractive to modern eyes. It was customary for the corporation to exercise supervision over the boarding-houses and to see that suitable women were in charge — often mothers of some of the girls. The corporation fixed the price, and \$1.25 was usual for some years. By 1852 it had risen in Lowell to \$2.10 for women and \$3.25 for men.<sup>27</sup>

The boarding houses might be of any size. In a small silk mill in Newport, New Hampshire, for example, three of the ten girls employed boarded with the manager. Isaiah Thomas, describing a visit to the cotton mill in Smithfield, Rhode Island, in July, 1813, said that the three hundred employees, "chiefly girls from ten to twenty years of age," lived in some thirty houses, owned by the company.<sup>28</sup>

In Lowell, the houses were considerably larger. Mrs. Robinson, whose mother ran one of them, said that they were usually very pleasant, rather like a club, with fifty or sixty girls in each. Lucy Larcom's widowed mother, "seeing no other opening for herself, — sold her small estate and moved to Lowell, with the intention of taking a corporation house for mill-girl boarders." She soon had "a large feminine family," fifteen to thirty years old, most of them from New Hampshire and Vermont, "and there was a fresh breezy sociability about them." The undertaking was not a financial success, however. Mrs. Larcom had always set a good table and could not accustom herself to keeping far enough within the allowance of \$1.25 per girl to make any profit. Apparently she went on

for some time, making up the difference from the earnings of her children.<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. Robinson's mother may have managed better, but when the daughter was about fifteen

my elder brother and I made up our minds that our mother had worked hard long enough, and we prevailed on her to give up keeping boarders. This she did, and while we remained in Lowell we supported the home by our earnings.

Not a bad record for two young people under twenty.

Lowell, of course, was the show place of American mill towns. It was started in 1822 as an overflow from Waltham, where the water power was inadequate for desired expansion. Within a few years its fame as an almost ideal manufacturing community had spread all over the country and abroad. In consequence, a number of foreigners as well as Americans have left detailed accounts of visits there, with the result that we know far more about Lowell than other mill towns.

Such evidence as we have, however, indicates that in general outline the others did not differ radically from it. Reports of the early days at Cheney Brothers' silk mill in South Manchester, Connecticut, are similar.<sup>30</sup> The mill building was used as a social center, and the machinery could be moved aside to permit dancing.

One of the girls in the skein room was encouraged to read aloud every day to the other operatives. These young women put aside a small amount of their earnings every month, and when one of their number went to Hartford she would purchase one or more new books out of this fund. As the work at that time was done by hand there was no disturbing whirr of machinery.

Some features of life at Lowell were unusual, however, if not absolutely unique. Charles Dicken, whose enthusiastic description has already been cited, worked up to the following climax:

I am now going to state three facts which will startle a large class of readers on this [i.e. the eastern] side of the Atlantic very much. Firstly, there is a joint stock piano in a great

many of the boarding houses. Secondly, nearly all these young ladies subscribe to circulating libraries. Thirdly, they have got up among themselves a periodical called THE LOWELL OFFERING, "A repository of original articles, written exclusively by females actively employed in the mills," — which is duly printed, published, and sold; and whereof I have brought away from Lowell four hundred good solid pages, which I have read from beginning to end.

Some people indeed thought that the passion for reading and writing was excessive in Lowell. Professor A. P. Peabody of Harvard used to lecture at the Lyceum there, to a large audience four-fifths of whom, he said were mill girls, and he testified that he had never seen such assiduous note-taking. A writer in the *Lowell Offering* for February, 1841, boasted that Lowell had neither theatre nor circus: "A number of years ago a theatre was built, but public opinion indignantly opposed it. Its doors were very shortly closed." Michael Chevalier, who visited Lowell in 1837, remarked somewhat sadly that reading was the only recreation, and he summarized his impressions thus: "Lowell is not an amusing city, but it is decent, neat, peaceful, and wise" Mrs. Robinson, whose recollections of early Lowell were almost wholly pleasant, was disappointed when she visited it in 1881. She concluded that although the girls had shorter hours, they had to work much harder and got more tired, and that they could hardly be blamed for not having kept up the early intellectual level.<sup>31</sup>

The country was certainly proud of Lowell, but it was proud of other — one may say of all — factory towns in only less degree. They displayed American enterprise. They caused cities to grow overnight. They produced goods which the public was glad to consume. Best of all, they cut down imports; thus they advanced the cause of economic independence and kept money at home. It was the reappearing mirage of autarchy, — obnoxious as British mercantilism or as the closed economy of modern dictators, but immensely alluring as part of "the American system." Its appeal was

never more potent than in the '20s and '30s of the last century.

The growth of the factory system and the charms of economic self-sufficiency are significant for this study only as they affected women's opportunity for work. It was generally felt that women who went into a factory were performing a patriotic duty, for they made it possible for industry to expand without withdrawing men from the farm or from western pioneering. Actually, it was almost inevitable that women, who had been the cloth-makers at home, should follow cloth-making into the mills. But this connection was not recognized, and from the comments of the time one might infer that before the coming of the factory women had been completely idle.<sup>32</sup>

The editor of *Niles Register*, an ardent supporter of American manufactures, missed no opportunity to report encouraging incidents. Whatever the real nature of the "lace factory" at Newport (already mentioned), Niles's comment illustrates the prevailing sentiment about manufactures:

*Elegant Employment.* There is a lace school or manufactory established at Newport, Rhode Island, which gives profitable employment in this new branch to 500 young ladies, and the various articles of their ingenious and tasty needle [sic] will bear comparison with anything of the kind ever imported.

(Who can reflect upon the preceding statement and not be delighted with its effect; whereby *five hundred* young ladies are enabled to earn a respectable livelihood and preserve themselves against those temptations which beset worthy females unblissed with wealth? There is more in this little item, than in any of the largest speeches ever delivered in Congress against the expediency of encouraging domestic industry.)

This was on July 23, 1827. On July 12 of the next year he recurred to the subject:

The Lace School at Newport, Rhode Island, is in great prosperity, and affords a beautiful employment to more than 500 females. They might manufacture more useful articles, but as this luxury *will* be indulged in, we are glad

that the money expended for it *remains at home*; so it only changes hands, and its circulation is promoted.

The following week Niles quoted with approval an account of the lace factory at Ipswich:

We have recently had an opportunity of examining a variety of beautiful articles of lace, plain and ornamented, from this establishment. On a comparison with the foreign laces, the superiority of the American article is manifest.

*Home manufacturers better than foreign* runs like a Wagnerian *motif* through the newspapers of the time, — the more doubtful the fact, perhaps, the louder the assertion.

The complacent and slightly condescending attitude toward "the worthy females" which Niles expressed was common. More critical comments were not entirely lacking. A writer in the *Boston Courier* for August 25, 1831, for example, complained that women were encroaching on man's prerogative and that it would be necessary to educate one's sons to be cooks and seamstresses, while a New York Solon urged that factory women should be paid low wages in order to keep their husbands sober and industrious. He said that he knew a town (not named) where women were in demand and received good pay, with the result: "The town was filled with the most lazy, drunken, worthless set of men I ever saw." But such discordant voices were rare.

How did the women concerned feel about factory work? The evidence which has come to hand indicates that they considered the conditions and the rewards as reasonable and were grateful for the opportunity. Mrs. Robinson may be quoted once more:<sup>33</sup>

We can hardly realize what a change the cotton factory made in the status of working women. Hitherto women had always been a money saving rather than a money earning member of the community. Her labor could command but small return. If she worked out as a servant, or "help," her wages were from 50c to \$1.00 a week; or, if she went from house to house by the day to spin and weave, or do tailorress work, she could get but 75c a week and her meals. As a teacher her services were not in demand and the arts, the

professions, and even the trades and industries, were nearly all closed to her. — Thus it happened, that if a women did not choose to marry or, when left a widow, to remarry, she had no choice but to enter one of the few employments open to her or to become a burden on the charity of some relative. — The cotton factory was a great opening to these lonely and dependent women. From a condition of almost pauperism they were placed at once above want. They could earn money and spend it as they pleased. They could gratify their tastes and desires without restraint and without rendering account to anybody.

Since Mrs. Robinson worked in the Lowell mills during their heyday, her experience was more favorable than that of many; and evidence presented elsewhere in this book shows that opportunities for women in other lines were better than she realized. Yet in most of these other lines, either some special aptitude and ingenuity or a lucky circumstance was necessary. For the great bulk of women, Mrs. Robinson's statement was no doubt substantially true. For a full half century, the hours, conditions of work, and pay in the mills were at least as satisfactory as in any occupation open to women. Later, while general standards were rising, the pressure for increased output made factory work less attractive. American girls then turned elsewhere, and their places at the looms were taken by newly arrived immigrants. But this trend was not apparent until well after 1940.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps some family reminiscenses on this subject may be relevant. It happens that two of my grandparents belonged to Rhode Island families active in textile manufacturing; and tradition, buttressed with private letters, account books, and public records, throws some light on women's part in it.<sup>35</sup>

It has been noted that Richard Anthony of Providence, Rhode Island, sold some early spinning machinery to Moses Brown in 1788. A few years later, Richard and his brother William set up successful cotton mills, first in Coventry, and then in Centerdale; and after a while Richard turned the management of the Centerdale mill over to his son James.

Apparently James was capable; the mill prospered, and the family was considered wealthy. But James died suddenly in 1836. As Richard was elderly by this time, the management of affairs fell to James's widow Sarah Williams. She, be it noted, came of three generations of Congregational clergymen, and it is said that her family regarded her marriage to a well-to-do manufacturer as something of a misalliance.

Upon her husband's death the poor lady had a difficult situation to cope with — nine children under eighteen years old, a senile father-in-law in whose name everything had to be done, and an involved business situation, for like other people of the time, James had borrowed heavily to provide for expansion. One who studies the accounts with which Sarah had to struggle cannot help doubting whether James himself could have weathered the storm of 1837. At any rate, Sarah could not do so, and bankruptcy had to be declared and the business sold.

For some time while affairs were being settled, Sarah managed the mill, and some of her accounts are in my possession. Immediately after her husband's death, as "administratrix" she paid wages due to fifteen employees from January 1 to February 13, 1836. Six of these employees were men. Two, perhaps foreman, received \$80.25 and \$61.26 respectively, one man got only \$5.88, and the other three had around \$25 each. The payments to the girls were as follows:

Harriet G. Hawk	\$15.16
Sally Lawrence	3.34
Fanny, Julia and Sarah Sherman	12.08
Sarah Lewis	7.06
Polly D. Lewis	10.00
Catherine Sherman	5.44
Elenor Knight	6.06

The amount of labor which these payments represented is stated only in regard to one of the men — \$25.25 for thirty-six days work. If the girls worked a similar time, the remuneration seems distinctly meagre.

Among the Anthony papers which have come to me is a letter written by Harriet I. Williams, then living in Newport, New Hampshire, to one of Mrs. Anthony's children. The part dealing with factory life is of interest:

John bought him a farm when he first came here he lived on it three years and found he could not work out of doors and he then bought a clothiers shop where he does custom carding and cloth dressing he has since built on another room and he and another man make silk saddlers (illegible) silk also silk stocking yarn of all colours and sizes he employs 10 girls in the silk (blotted) we board three of them he has business enough in the other part of the shop from the first of June till December we run the card machine all the time night and day for six or eight weeks then day times till October then this cloth dressing lasts 3 or 4 months, we are pleasantly situated a short distance from the heart of the village on sugar river our village has three meeting houses two taverns a court house and a number of stores so you see we have quite a village there are also neare us two small woolen Factorys

... for the last five months I have been to work in the factory and boarded at home I have made between two and three dollars a week beside my board which was a dollar I expect to go to work for John the first of June I like carding better than weaving in warm weather it is not so hard and beside I am at home . . . I have never worked on the silk any I dont think I should like it very well it is to puttering work for me

Harriet gave her age:

I am no not quite an old maid for I was only twenty-eight last fall and who knows but I may have a husband before I am thirty nothing strange nowadays

Her name (not her punctuation!) suggests a relationship; but I have been unable to trace her, and I cannot tell whether she got the husband or not.

Not far from the Anthony cotton mill was a woolen mill, also a family affair with a youngish manager, George Waterman, nephew of the owners. In 1822 or '23 Susan Baxter and her fifteen-year-old daughter Britannia came from their home on Cape Cod to find work in it. Ever since Mrs. Baxter's husband, a sailor, had left home to fight the War

of 1812 she had been eking out a precarious livelihood as a tailoress. When a friend told her about the recently opened mills in Rhode Island it seemed a promising opportunity. Mother and daughter found work as they had hoped, and before the year was out the daughter (not quite sixteen) had married the thirty-year old manager, a widower with three children. The marriage was a nine-days wonder, for the neighbors had been uncertain whether the manager's calls were upon the still comely matron or the very young girl.

The story ends like a fairy tale. The marriage was a success if life-long love, between step-mother and step-children as well as between husband, wife and their children, constitutes success. And Susan Baxter's husband, long mourned as dead, came back. He had been a prisoner at Dartmoor, discharged penniless after long delay, and had been obliged to take ship as a sailor quite around the world in order to reach his home.

The oldest daughter of George and Britannia Waterman married a son of James and Sarah Anthony, and their youngest child was my father. Sarah, who had stepped down from the New England parsonage to marry a manufacturer, and as a widow struggled to carry on his business, died relatively young, but Britannia, the mill girl who married her boss, lived to extreme old age. I remember her well, a serene and beautiful old lady greatly interested in her many descendants and in her church. If she or her husband's relatives had ever regarded her work at the loom as a family blot, the attitude had long since evaporated and no hint of it ever reached my ears.

## *Conclusion*

American women at work in a variety of fields have appeared in the foregoing chapters. The evidence is too fragmentary and uneven to warrant many conclusions.

In spite of the bulk of available material mentioned in the introduction, information on many points is meagre. It must be remembered that every occurrence here collected has had to make its way through three narrow gates. First, it impressed someone enough to be written down. Second, in despite of mildew, fire, and the rubbish heap, the record was preserved. Third, this record came to the attention of the present writer. Other students will compensate for the narrowness of the third gate, but nothing can be done about the other two.

I have tried to find out what the conditions of work were for women in the early years of the Republic, how they compared with those of colonial days, and what changes occurred between 1776 and 1840. No simple answer can be given to any of the questions posed.

It seems certain that a larger proportion of women worked outside their homes in the years after 1776 than earlier, and that a number of new opportunities were gradually opened to them, but that new restrictions and handicaps developed also. A working woman of — say — 1760, was considered simply on her own merits. After 1800 or thereabouts, such a woman was self-conscious, and her neighbors critical. She was no longer just an individual trying to earn a living; she was a female who had stepped out of the “graceful and dignified retirement”<sup>1</sup> which so well became her sex. Her emergence might be praised or blamed; it could not be taken as a matter of course.

Several influences increased the proportion of such women. First, in marked contrast to colonial days, there was an excess of women throughout the East; the frontier drained off the young men. The early censuses are not helpful in regard to age or marital or occupational status, but that of 1840 discloses that the nine states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina had a total of 397,167 men between twenty and thirty years of age, compared with 412,124 women of the same age — an excess of 4.957. The actual lack of balance was probably much greater; an excess of young men among the newcomers from Europe helped to swell the figures, but when they were of different language, religion, or social status from the older stock, they had little effect on the supply of husbands. The question of marital status is of less importance now, when married women furnish more than half of the women wage earners, but it was extremely important formerly. As late as 1900, for example, from the *unmarried* women of the country, — slightly over one-quarter of the adult female population, — about two-thirds of the women wage-earners were recruited, while the married, widowed, and divorced together furnished the remaining third.<sup>2</sup>

Second, the growth of cities and the development of inventions made the patriarchal farm household of colonial days less and less typical. The work of women was being taken out of the home, and they had to follow their jobs.

Third, this same development created new opportunities for work, notably in factories. By creating new goods, also, and hence new opportunities for spending, it increased the incentives to earn money.

But there were restrictive influences. Harriet Martineau summed them up in a striking passage:<sup>3</sup>

The Americans have, in their treatment of women, fallen below, not only their own democratic principles, but the practise of some parts of the Old World. The unconsciousness of both parties to the injuries suffered by women at the

hands of those who hold the power is a sufficient proof of the low degree of civilization in this important particular at which they rest. While woman's intellect is confined, her morals crushed, her health ruined, her weaknesses encouraged, and her strength punished, she is told that her lot is cast in the paradise of women: and there is no country in the world where there is so much boasting of the "chivalrous" treatment she enjoys. That is to say — she has the best place in the stage-coaches; where there are not chairs enough for everybody, the gentlemen stand; she hears oratorical flourishes on public occasions about wives and home, and apostrophes to women; her husband's hair stands on end at the idea of her working, and he toils to indulge her with money; she has the liberty to get her brain turned by religious excitements, that her attention may be diverted from morals, politics, and philosophy; and especially, her morals are guarded by the strictest observance of propriety in her presence. In short, indulgence is given her as a substitute for justice.

This is a strong statement. Miss Martineau herself noted many honorable exceptions — women who rose above these handicaps, and men who encouraged their doing so. Yet there is considerable evidence to corroborate her conclusions. Henry B. Fearon, the Englishman who travelled through the United States in 1818, wrote more mildly but in similar vein:

The American female character requires our attention; in mental pursuits it would appear to be at present but little advanced. This proceeds no doubt from a variety of causes; all that has been said of the male population, by a natural reaction affecting the female too. The demand, too, (if I may be excused a mercantile phrase upon the subject,) exceeding the supply, together with the comparatively less value set upon domestic comfort, may, perhaps, have tended to produce the extreme attention to mere personal ornament, and the universal neglect of either mental or domestic knowledge, which appears to exist among the females here, as compared with those of England.

Writing in 1851, the Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer expressed much the same point of view:

Men have, in general, at this time, more gallantry than actual esteem for women. They are polite to them, and ready to

comply with their wishes; but they regard them evidently more as pretty children than as their reasonable equals.<sup>4</sup>

It is natural that such comments were most frequently expressed by foreigners. But many thoughtful Americans agreed. The young Boston widow, Mary Wilder Van Schalkwyck, (later Mrs. White,) was quite as emphatic. Writing in 1803 to a male friend — an act in itself, she said, which would be considered imprudent if not actually mad — she warned him not to expect much profit from a correspondence with her, and continued:<sup>5</sup>

I am grateful extremely to find you disposed to consider women as "rational and human." That we do not more often conduct ourselves like reasonable beings is the fault of man; who, by the attention he pays to the exterior, seldom fails to convince us that the more difficult attainments of moral and intellectual excellence may be easily dispensed with, provided the person be pretty, and the air and dress fashionable. When one reflects for a moment on the manner in which woman has been treated, it appears rather wonderful that she preserves her rank among intelligent beings than that she is so often vain and trifling.

The superficial education which alone was generally available to girls, already described in the chapter on teachers, was held largely responsible for the defects in women noted by these and other critics. Fanny Kemble complained that even the accomplishments were seldom well taught, and more solid attainments almost wholly lacking; there were, of course, exceptions, she admitted, but either they were rare or she had been especially unfortunate in the women she had met. Miss Martineau's testimony was similar. Mrs. Hall found the conversation of American women generally vapid, and she disliked the custom by which at social affairs the men and women promptly separated and conversed wholly by themselves.<sup>6</sup>

The general ill-health of American women also provoked frequent comment. As noted in Chapter II, it seems to have been measurably below that of colonial women. Certainly both men and women of the nineteenth century acted on an

assumption of "female delicacy" which would have astonished their grandparents. Ill health quickly sets up a vicious circle, and if it was partly caused by current ideas, it served in turn to strengthen them.<sup>7</sup>

When Miss Martineau charged that women's "morals" were crushed, she used the word, of course, in its broad sense. At the end of the same passage she employed it in the nineteenth-century restricted meaning — practically synonymous with chastity. It was generally admitted that American women stood extremely high in this respect.

A large and increasing number of women were taking active part in philanthropic efforts. Dr. Bentley wrote in 1802, for example, of the rapid growth of "female associations" for the care of female children; one had lately been established at Savannah, and he knew of earlier ones in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, as well as in Salem, where he was glad to note a number of his own parishioners were members.<sup>8</sup>

Philanthropic — largely palliative — activity among women had not yet led to any widespread interest in reform; that was to come after 1840. Miss Martineau was pained by the absence of such interest. The reproach directed against the few exceptional women who showed it, she wrote, was

not that the ladies hold anti-slavery opinions, but that they act on them. The incessant outcry about the retiring modesty of the sex proves the opinion of the censors to be that fidelity to conscience is inconsistent with retiring modesty.

And speaking strictly for herself, Miss Martineau added, "If that be so, let the modesty succumb."<sup>9</sup>

This is the reverse of the shield, and it does not make an attractive picture to modern eyes. It explains why the author of *Angels and Amazons* should speak of the years before 1833 as "a dull interregnum in the rise of American women," and claim that for half a century they had practically stood still.<sup>10</sup> Yet, although there is ground for the generalization, the instances here given show that the charge is not wholly justified.

It appears to be true that women were accorded somewhat

less freedom after the Revolution, dedicated to the ideal that all *men* were created equal, than they had enjoyed before it. Some reasons for this illogical development may be tentatively suggested.

First, in pioneer days there were few codes, legal or traditional; matters were dealt with as they came up, according to the English Common Law, to be sure, but the Law adapted to fit new conditions. The Revolution was followed by a mania for codifying, all done of course by men. Apparently they were not ready to accept formally some conditions which they had tactily permitted, and so, perhaps unconsciously, they curtailed the existing privileges of women.<sup>11</sup>

Another reason, affecting certain lines of work, lay in the growing recognition of the need for academic preparation to supplant the apprenticeship method. Women often acquired experience almost imperceptibly, but one cannot gain a formal professional education imperceptibly, and men were not yet willing to admit women to higher education. This unwillingness is strikingly exemplified in medicine; the objection of the Boston physician of 1828, quoted in chapter II, was less to women's practising as midwives than to their being trained in midwifery.<sup>12</sup>

A more significant reason, if I understand the situation, lay in the desire for conspicuous display. With the growth of prosperity, the feeling that everyone must work and that all needful labor was honorable became modified. The ruling sex, now lifted above the hardships of pioneer life, and accumulating some wealth, found a satisfying proof of their achievements in maintaining their wives and daughters in ornamental idleness.<sup>13</sup>

This ornamental idleness — it had other names at the time — was of course never more than a polite fiction in most cases. Large families, bad health, and the attempt to maintain a fashionable front with the aid of poor servants and primitive household equipment, do not make for ease even if there is plenty of money; and most families were not rich. But fashions are often copied where they are most inappro-

priate, and the American dogma of equality encouraged the poor to ape the folly of the rich. Whether approximated or not, the ideal of dignified leisure for women bound them to the home.

These opposing forces, on the one side driving more women to work and offering them more opportunities, and on the other holding them back, affected different kinds of work in varying degree. The situation may be passed in hasty review.

If rather fewer women owned and managed hotels, the difference was more than made up by the popularity of boarding houses, in which women reigned supreme. Women merchants and craftsmen were as numerous as ever, but they were more apt to confine themselves to the making and selling of dry goods and clothing, — lines in which they dealt chiefly with women. We know so little about women farmers that any comparison is impossible, but the growth of population and of cities had given some women an opportunity as dealers in real estate; they were probably few, but one gets the impression that they were proportionately about as numerous as they are today. The new textile mills — the first fruits of the Industrial Revolution — employed more women than men (although not in the higher positions) and gave a new cash value to the labor of the ordinary woman.

Differences between colonial and later days varied more sharply in the professions. Women shared *pari passu* in the growing popularity of the theater and in the financial and other rewards open to authorship. Only a very few women ministers made their appearance, in several Protestant denominations, but the development of foreign missions opened a field of religious work in which women shared the perils and rewards with men, and — gently and hesitatingly — defied the traditional limitations of their sex.

The greatest loss of status was to be found in health work; although more positions were open to nurses, their prestige seems to have diminished slightly, while midwives and the

untrained women doctors had suffered a severe loss for which there was as yet no corresponding gain.

The most substantial gain, on the other hand, was in the teaching profession. Here the relative as well as the absolute number of women had greatly increased, and even more important, the quality of the preparation open to them had improved notably. It was still inferior to that available for men, but the distance was being lessened. This gain in educational opportunity was to affect women in all walks of life and to improve their capacity in all lines of endeavor.

A study of this kind presents a special problem if one is to avoid distortion. A story by Aesop comes to mind, of a lion and a man holding an argument as to which race was superior. The man pointed to a statue of a man throttling a lion, and said that all the statues he had ever seen gave evidence of man's greater strength. "Ah," said the lion, "but you must remember that the sculptors were all men. Any of *our* sculptors would have shown the lion triumphant." I have tried not to display similar partiality. I look forward to the day when a deed of whatever kind will be recorded, and praised or blamed, without reference to the sex of the doer, — or the race, or the creed. But that day has not yet dawned, and meanwhile it seems worth taking some pains to put women's work in as nearly fair perspective as circumstances permit.

The women of the years reviewed here have received less than their due share of attention from historians. They may lack something of the charm and spontaneity of colonial women, and few of them reached the heroic stature which seemed almost commonplace in the generation of Dorothea Dix, Margaret Fuller, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Julia Ward Howe, Susan B. Anthony, and the Blackwell sisters. But it is never, of course, merely by accident that one period follows another, and that from 1776 to 1840 was the seed-time from which sprang the great mid-century flowering. These earlier women were the mothers and grandmothers, the aunts and teachers — the warnings and examples — under whose in-

uence the Beechers, the Anthonys and the Blackwells grew up. They too deserve our grateful remembrance.



## *Appendix*



## *Variation and Innovation in the Social Position of Women: A Comment*

BY LEWIS A. DEXTER

The opportunities for women as presented in *Career Women of America, 1776-1840*, may be considered in terms of social change, — that is, of the alteration in the *type* of relationship allowed or prescribed in the existing society. All societies set up requirements for certain offices or functions, and regard certain forms of behavior as essential or desirable for members of one social category and not for those of another. All or nearly all societies have used sex in one way or another as a means of differentiating between those who are and those who are not "entitled" to hold a certain status or office; and have demanded or desired different types of behavior from the two sexes.<sup>1</sup> But different societies have shown the greatest possible variation in the standards they have set up.

Was there any significant social change in the ascription of occupational status to women during the years from 1776 to 1840? Did the occupational choices open to women alter significantly? If so, what were these changes?

Some of the alterations in vocational practises may be regarded less as a genuine change than as a conforming to type. In spite of local deviations and of changes in the personality admired in women, the *typical* relationship in work-prestige situations between the sexes has remained fairly constant in the modern world. *She* must be subordinate; and although the restrictions have been modified of late years they have not by any means ceased to exist. Except by accident, — such as family connection, for example, — women still find it diffi-

cult to assume positions of prestige and power, particularly those that give direct and obvious control over male subordinates. If the position is in a sense anonymous, if there is no face-to-face relationship, or if the subordinate men are quite devoid of prestige, it is easier.

Consequently, — to return to the years from 1776 to 1840, — it is not strange that women were allowed in the mission field and in revivalist churches, (the members of which usually had little prestige,) or that they engaged in literature and acting, since by and large the arts were not very highly regarded in America. Again, the boarding-housekeeper could be assimilated to the role of servant; and the merchant and shopkeeper tended more and more to concentrate on services to women. This conforming to type is in contrast to the colonial period, when, as demonstrated in *Colonial Women of Affairs*, the intense need of workers led to a relaxation of many of these customary restraints on women's work. In the early national period, the need was not quite so intense, and with increasing wealth, social stratification became more apparent.<sup>2</sup> Hence it is quite probable that there were proportionately fewer women of large affairs between 1776 and 1840 than there had been a century earlier. It must not be overlooked, of course, that the growth of the business unit was already reducing the proportion of men who were self-employed; and the same tendency would be even more true of women.

The development of nursing was an extension of a traditional occupation for women. The peculiar intensity of the ideal of "female modesty" is worthy of a study far beyond the limits of this note, but the conflict which developed between the increasing emphasis on health and welfare, on the one hand, and this "female modesty" on the other, suggests interesting parallels. Undoubtedly, some who would normally insist vigorously on women's "staying in their proper place." came to favor women's receiving medical treatment from women. Similarly, for example, many advocates of keeping Negroes "in their place" thought it was improper

for white professional people, — doctors, lawyers, and so forth, — to have them as clients; and so came to approve professional training for Negroes.

During this period, the opportunities for women in teaching greatly increased. True, there had been plenty of women teachers before 1776, but with few exceptions they had only been engaged either in instructing the very young, or in imparting the highly superficial education which was then considered adequate for girls. The growth of democracy put a new emphasis on education — primarily for boys — and hence created a demand for more teachers. Here the principle noted in the colonial period applied — when the demand for workers is intense, women are accepted. Since women were not only available in greater numbers, but also were cheaper than men, they filled an increasing proportion of the teaching profession. It then became necessary to allow these women — potential teachers, — more education themselves. This increased education and perhaps the habit of authority which teaching requires, in turn extended the sphere of what was regarded as proper behavior and range of interests for women. And toward 1840, as later events showed, many school teachers became ardent advocates of the women's rights movement. There is an interesting parallel here, with what has happened in the case of numerous ethnic or racial minority groups. In order to transmit certain features of the dominant civilization, they have been taught the history, philosophy, and technique of our society. As a result they have begun to demand for themselves the equality of treatment which they had studied about; and often school teachers have been leaders in making this demand.

The really significant *new* vocational opportunity for women in these years was due to the creation of a new type of occupation — that connected with the development of factories. In a country less devoted to ideas of efficiency and industrial progress than the United States, it is quite possible that notions of "female modesty" and reserve might have excluded women from this kind of work altogether. Or had

the demand for men's labor, on the farm and in the West, been less insistent; or again, had the new power plants been devoted to heavy industry, — steel or meat-packing, say, — instead of to light textiles, it is quite possible that the "female modesty" argument might have won, and work in factories come to be regarded as strictly for men. Instead, the considerations which led to the increasing employment of women teachers carried the day: women were available in greater numbers and they worked more cheaply. There was still another factor — they were more docile than men. It is worth noting that as time went on, the women working together as a group inevitably learned to act in concert as a group against their employers. Sociologically speaking, they ceased to be primarily "females" and became industrial workers. The parallel here with the employment of Negroes by northern employers in the 1920s as a means of circumventing trade unions is clear.

The instances just noted illustrate the general proposition, that restrictions upon the labor of any group tend to be modified when the demand for labor is sufficiently strong. In the two cases of teaching and factory work, the demand was both strong and continuous, so that the behaviors expected of women were ultimately modified.

1. This formulation is based on Kingsley Davis, *Human Society*, (New York, 1949) pp. 621-38.
2. Cf. J. S. Slotkin, *Social Anthropology*, (New York, 1950) pp. 81-82. To put it another way: all customs are contravened sometimes, and many develop what may be called *customary* violations, that is, violations which are tolerated or even expected. Reasons for encouraging violations of the code of female subordination were less frequent and less pressing in the relatively well-to-do American society of the 1820s than they had been a century earlier. Moreover, a new or at least greatly intensified sanction had been added — modesty. Consequently the code had become more stringent.

## Notes

### INTRODUCTION

The quotation from Eliza Southgate will be found in Bowne, under date of June 1, 1801, and that from Catherine Beecher in Kirkland, vol. II, page 84.

### CHAPTER I

#### *“Pouring the Fresh Instruction O'er the Mind”*

1. Hussey, 20.
2. Larcom, 160.
3. Quoted in Woody, I, 500.
4. [Washington] *National Intelligencer*, November 3, 1821.
5. *Ibid.*, July 17, 1821.
6. *Society*, II, 259.
7. Larcom, 39, 42 ff.
8. *Rules and Regulations*, 14 ff.
9. Huckel, 9.
10. Small, 282.
11. Burton, 17, 19-23, 36, 40, 41-44.
12. A. S. Blackwell, 23, 43.
13. Harper, I, 24, 34, 44, 102.
14. Combe, I, 56-58, 102-06, 134.
15. *Ibid.*, 238-40.
16. Bentley, II, 31, 173, 215, 291, 315, 358, 360, 364, 441.
17. Watkins, 105 ff.
18. Bowne, September 14, 1800.
19. [Boston] *Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, October 17, 1799.
20. Byles, June 23, 1800; April 23, 1803; February 14 and April 11, 1805; February 27, 1806; February 9 and September 25, 1807; June 3, 1809; February 2, 1811; January 2, 1812; January 5, 1813.
21. *Boston Chronicle*, November 20, 1800.
22. *Augusta Chronicle*, November 7, 1795.
23. *South Carolina Gazette*, February 5, 1794.
24. *Virginia Federalist*, December 11, 1799.
25. *National Intelligencer*, September 19, 1821.
26. Page 47.
27. *Somerset Journal*, October 19, 1831.
28. Woody, I, 201 ff; II, 450 ff.
29. *Ibid.*, I, 329; Blandin, 27 ff; 36 ff; introduction to *Story of a Great Miracle, and Dictionary of American Biography*.
30. Roof, 19; Woody, I, 330.

31. *Ibid.*, I, 341.
32. *Ibid.*, I, 381; Blandin, 43 ff; cf. Taylor, 12.
33. Woody, I, 301.
34. *Ibid.*, II, 340; and Vanderpoel, *passim*.
35. Blandin, 9
36. The main facts about Mrs. Willard may be found in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, in Lutz, and in her own writings.
37. For Catherine Beecher, see Stowe, 73-137; the *Dictionary of American Biography*, and her own writings.
38. Bremer, I, 615; Woody, I, 363, 366-68.
39. For Mary Lyon, see the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Gilchrist, Bradford, 67-97, Huckel, and J. M. Taylor.
40. Gilchrist, 179-202.
41. *Ibid.*, 231.
42. *Ibid.*, 307.
43. Woody, II, 469.

## CHAPTER II

### *"The Midwife and Doctress Business"*

1. For the period before 1776, see Dexter, 58-77, and Spruill, 267-75.
2. Quoted in Spruill, 271.
3. *Maryland Historical Magazine*, XVII, 379.
4. Morton, 71.
5. Nutting and Dock, II, 342 ff
6. Drinker, 117.
7. Carlyle, 35, 39, 79.
8. Morton, 54.
9. Bowditch, 84, 90.
10. *Ibid.*, 152.
11. *Ibid.*, 107, 112, 117, 131-32, 134.
12. *Ibid.*, 147.
13. *Ibid.*, 124
14. J. Jackson, 118-29.
15. Holyoke, 141-52.
16. Drinker, 56, 63.
17. Bentley, III, 71-73.
18. Wakely, 313.
19. Bernard, 196-97.
20. *Maine Historical Society Collections*, I, 380.
21. Bartlett, 13; Jacobi, 140-43.
22. J. Ware, 7
23. Mead, 17; Cheney, IV, 347.
24. Washington, IV, 320.
25. Bentley, II, 308.
26. Phillips, 321.
27. Gregory, 37.
28. Heaton, 349.
29. Woody, I, 227, 263.
30. Macy and Hussey, 93; cf. Jacobi, 141.

31. Dall, *College, Market and Court*, 226.
32. Dexter, 70-72.
33. [Boston] *Federal Gazette*, November 22, 1791.
34. Cheney, 332; Dall, *op cit.*, 229.
35. Bentley, II, 304, 437; IV, 415.
36. Tapley, 99, 100, 104.
37. Eldon in *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 9, 1929.
38. Roof, 226.
39. Royall, *Southern Tour*, II, 224-25.
40. Chadwick, *passim*; Jacobi, 142.
41. Hunt, 110, 123, 129, 135, 162, 164, 139
42. *Ibid.*, 215-18, 265-70; Chadwick, 463; E. Blackwell, 65, 73.
43. *Boston Morning Journal*, January 5, 1875; *Dictionary of American Biography*.
44. Chadwick, 458; H. B. Montgomery, 117-33, 187.
45. Combe, I, 306.
46. *Ibid.*, 288-89.
47. *Society*, II, 58, 260-67; *Restrospect*, I, 38, 64.
48. Kemble, I, 38.
49. Gilchrist, 231
50. Lutz, 181.
51. Hunt, 139-40
52. Combe, II, 32, 216.
53. Hunt, 170, 177, 222-25, 247.
54. Heaton, 389, 392; Jacobi, 143-44.
55. J. Ware, 7
56. Gardner, 27 ff.
57. Gregory, *passim*.
58. Nutting and Dock, II, 339 ff.
59. Chadwick, 462; Jacobi, 145-47; *Dictionary of American Biography*.
60. Linton, 116.
61. Wright, *Hawkers and Walkers*, 119.
62. Chadwick 467; E. Blackwell, *passim*.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Despite Saint Paul*

1. Cf. Chapin; P. Cooke; Ross; and Hays; also see A. S. Blackwell, 22, 24.
2. For Jemima Wilkinson, see Hudson, and *Dictionary of American Biography*.
3. Hiltzheimer, 65, 66, 145.
4. La Rochefoucault, 205-15.
5. Hudson, 107, and appendix; her death is noted in *Niles*, XVI, 346.
6. Dexter, 150-53; Evans, *passim*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XX, 433.
7. Thwing, 144, 257-59; Colby, 179.
8. Melish, I, 37.
9. Chevalier, 321
10. Roe, 103, 113.
11. Wright, 224.
12. Cresson, 8, 189.
13. Rodman, 22, 24.

14. Jones, I, 115-17 and 277.
15. *Ibid.*, 300 n.
16. *Ibid.*, 299-306; the quotation is from p. 303.
17. Combe, I, 224
18. Dexter, 148-50; Buckley, I, 17, 119, 126; Stevens, part III.
19. B. B. Tylor, 160.
20. Dall, 437-38.
21. Stewart, 190.
22. *Ibid.*, 191.
23. *Ibid.*, 191-92.
24. *Ibid.*, 394.
25. *Ibid.*, 306, 307, 310, 377, 389, 391.
26. *Ibid.*, 306.
27. This denomination was later called simply "Free Baptist," and some years ago it reunited with the Baptists. It happens that I grew up in the shadow of a Free Baptist Theological School, in which my father taught. There were occasional women students preparing for the ministry, and the few ordained women were well received; but it was generally believed that women were more numerous and found it easier to obtain parishes among some other denominations, notably the Universalists and possibly the Congregationalists.
28. *Dictionary of American Biography*.
29. Eddy, II, 137-44.
30. Cooke, 282.
31. Knowles, 42-43.
32. *Ibid., passim*; Dunning, 382; Woods, *passim*.
33. Knowles, 85-87.
34. H. . Montgomery, 21.
35. *Ibid.*, 15; Disosway, 242; Tracy, 527, 553.
36. S. K. Bolton, 273-326
37. Bacon, 154 ff.
38. Tracy, 713.
39. Knowles, 72.
40. Rowe, 178.

## CHAPTER IV

### *For Hours of Ease*

1. Washington, IV, 253.
2. Combe, I, 50, 87.
3. Ireland, *Records*, I, 47, 93.
4. *National Intelligencer*, December 27, 1830; *Ibid.*, November 24, 1830; Wemyss, I, 119.
5. *Boston Courier*, December 17, 1825.
6. *National Intelligencer*, September 21, 1804; *ibid.*, January 6, 1821.
7. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1806
8. Werner, 28-33.
9. *New England Palladium*, December 1, 1808.
10. Bentley, III, 411.
11. *Public Advertiser*, September 16, 1830.
12. Vail, 116 ff.

13. Combe I, 242-43
14. *Ibid.*, 323-24.
15. Bremer, I, 581-82; II, 623-24.
16. Hornblow, I, 148-58.
18. *Ibid.*, 224 ff.; *Boston Argus*, October 16, 1792.
17. *Ibid.*, 163-65, 187.
19. Hornblow, I, 227.
20. Dunlap, I, 82; Wood, 26.
21. Hornblow, I, 219 ff
22. *Ibid.*, I, 200 ff, (portrait;) Dunlap, I, 105; Wood, 111; Ireland, *Records*, I, 165
23. *Ibid.*, I, 166; Dunlap, I, 116; Hornblow, I, 206.
24. *Ibid.*, I, 209; Vail, *Rowson*, 47 ff.
25. Dr. Bentley, although critical, was extremely interested. See *Diary*, I, 379, 381, 384; II, 20, 77, 80, 116, 127, 132, 227, 258, 386, 401, 409.
26. Dunlap, I, 82, 280, 313; *Boston Magazine*, October 26, 1805.
27. Ireland, *Records*, I, 225; II, 388; Dunlap, I, 337.
28. *Ibid.*, I, 173, 287, 314; Hornblow, I, 213
29. Matthews and Hutton, III, 77 ff.; Ireland, *Duff*, *passim*.
30. *Ibid.*, 259, ff.; Wemyss, 149 ff.; *Dictionary of American Biography*.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Wood, 413.
33. Hornblow, I, 191.
34. *Ibid.*, 236 n.
35. Wood, 69-70.
36. Ireland, I, 528.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Inky-Fingered Sisterhood*

Nearly all the writers and all the more important printers named in this chapter are listed in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, — some of the printers in an article dealing primarily with a male relative. I have cited the *Dictionary* only where little other good material is available.

1. Dunlap II, 381 ff.; Hornblow, I, 209, 212.
2. Griswold, 21 ff.; Wharton, 111-12; M. C. Tyler, II, 419.
3. Child, *Letters*, II, 130-38; Cummings, III, 641; Cheney, IV, 341-42; *Columbian Centinel*, October 22, 1791.
4. Royall, *Sketches*, 336-37.
5. Stearns, *passim*; Mott, *Magazines*, I, Chapter 1 and ff.; Tassin, Chapter 1.
6. Finley, *passim*; Mott, *op cit.*, I, 349-51, 583-92
7. Bentley, II, 246; Cairns, 205; Wegelin, 20. Ample selections from the works of Mrs. Morton and the "poetesses" discussed below may be found in the anthologies of Griswold and of May.
8. Reed, 35; E. V. Smith, 386. One poem is included in both Stevenson and Felleman.
9. Brooks, 155-56; Griswold, 69; Cone, 111. One poem is included in Kreymborg.
10. Byles, August 28, 1827; Royall, *Sketches*, 300; Bremer, I, 107; Haight, *passim*. Stevenson prints two of her poems and Kreymborg one.
11. Wegelin, *passim*

12. E.g., Pancoast, 349.
13. Vail, *Rowson*, 47 ff.; Halsey, Introduction to *Charlotte Temple*; Knapp, Memoir in *Charlotte's Daughter*; Buckingham, I, 83-85; for her poems, see Griswold, 33 ff. And see Mott and Dall, in n. 14.
14. Cummings, III, 637; Wegelin, 19; Dall, *Romance, passim*; Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 39-40. Mott prefers *The Coquette* to *Charlotte Temple*. I would rather take his word for it than try to read *The Coquette* again. For further discussion of the recipe for popular novels, see Brown, part I.
15. Martineau, *Society*, II, 305; Royall, *Sketches*, 266; Bremer, I, 31 ff., and *passim*.
16. *Ibid.*, I, 206; II, 565-66; Cone, 111-14; Wegelin, 15; Griswold, 110.
17. Dexter, 66-79; Hanaford, 688; Salley, 34.
18. Thomas, *History*, II, 158; Salley, 34-35; Heartman, 44.
19. *Ibid.*, 13.
20. Thomas, *op. cit.*, II, 168; Salley, 66.
21. Hillhouse, 144-45, 468-70, 477; Rev. G. White, 687; Knight, I, 1047, 1058, II, 1039; Brigham, *History*, I, 133.
22. Thomas, *op. cit.*, II, 140; Wroth, 144-45.
23. Wormer, 172.
24. Seidensticker, 168, 253.
25. Brigham, *op. cit.*, II, 919; Palsits, 483; McCulloch, 208.
26. *Ibid.*, 134, 217, 238.
27. *Ibid.*, 96, 104; Thomas, *op. cit.*, II, 77.
28. McCulloch, 98, 222; *Dictionary of American Biography*.
29. Hildeburn, 89 ff.; Palsits, 483; McCulloch, 208; Thomas, *op. cit.*, II, 107; Brigham, *op. cit.*, I, 651.
30. *Ibid.*, I, 701;
31. *Ibid.*, I, 610.
32. Tapley, 56-70; Thomas, *op. cit.*, I, 398.
33. *Ibid.*, I, 267; Tapley, 49; Shipton, 13; Hanaford, 691.
34. Brigham, *R. I. Newspapers*, 86; Hammet, 129-30.
35. Thomas, *op. cit.*, II, 191; Heartman, 45; Hanaford, 691.
36. Wiley, 69; Tapley, 68-74.
37. Tinker, 28.
38. For Mrs. Royall, see *Dictionary of American Biography*; Porter; G. S. Jackson; Blankenhorn; and Mott, *Magazines*, I, 356, ff.
39. Millington, 53, 58.
40. By R. L. Wright; by G. S. Jackson; and by M. M. Mathews.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Homes from Home*

1. Martin, 26.
2. Ashmead, 86; Asbury, II, 280, 318; III, 79.
3. Griffin, 136.
4. *Massachusetts Sentinel*, May 2, 1788.
5. [Norfolk] *Epitome of the Times*, November 24, 1800, and ff.
6. *American Notes*, Chapter III.
7. Davis, 347-48.
8. Hiltzheimer, 59; *Norfolk Herald*, January 17, 1801; Asbury, III, 434.

9. *New York Evening Post*, October 9, 1802; Quinn, 166.
10. *Augusta Chronicle*, September 19, 1795; Monroe, 60; *Maine Gazette*, September 14, 1821.
11. Pynchon, 106, 162; *Virginia Gazette and Petersburg Intelligencer*, March 18, 1796; *Charleston City Gazette*, November 13, 1797; *Norfolk Epitome of the Times*, September 8, 1801
12. *National Intelligencer*, July 30, 1805; January 10, 1830.
13. *Albany Gazette*, July 1, 1796; Monroe, 60.
14. Supplement to the *Charleston City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, June 3, 1795.
15. *Society*, II, 245-46, 249
16. *Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, May 28, 1795; *Providence Gazette*, June 20, 1795.
17. *Charleston City Gazette*, May 6, 1797; November 13, 1797; January 31, 1798.
18. *National Intelligencer*, February 7, 1806; November 13, 1821.
19. Washington, IV, 21, 22; 31; 35; 48; 119.
20. Asbury, III, 336; 434
21. Davis, 371
22. Trollope, I, 32, 34
23. Fearon, 7, 43.
24. *Ibid.*, 81.
25. *Society*, II, 200, 211-12
26. *Retrospect*, II, 200.
27. Mrs. Hall, 242; *Society*, I, 213.
28. Ashe, 189. Cf. Melish, quoted in Nevins, 70.
29. *Society*, II, 192-93.
30. Fearon, 97.
31. Mrs. Hall, 236.
32. *Ibid.*, 266, 275.
33. *Ibid.*, 133, 290, 293.
34. *Society*, II, 210; *Retrospect*, I, 91, 118; *Society*, I, 242.
35. Byles, January 24, 1798; August 5 and 26, 1801.
36. Penny, 415-16.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Behind the Counter*

1. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 27.
2. *American Herald*, December 20, 1784.
3. *New York Morning Post*, March 20, 1792; *National Intelligencer*, December 8, 1806 and February 10, 1818.
4. *New England Palladium*, May 24, 1808; [Baltimore] *Federal Gazette*, October 15 and December 8, 1806; *Charleston City Gazette*, June 3, 1797.
5. *South Carolina State Gazette*, January 7, 1794; [Boston] *Columbian Centinel*, June 2, 1791; *New York Weekly Museum*, April 1, 1797.
6. *National Intelligencer*, December 7, 1804; *Norfolk Epitome*, January 5, 1801
7. *Georgia Gazette*, July 2, 1795.

8. *Columbian Centinel*, October 5, 1791; *Massachusetts Spy and Worcester Gazette*, May 24, 1792; *Salem Mercury*, March 8, 1791.
9. *Columbian Centinel*, September 7 and 14, 1791.
10. *Petersburg Intelligencer*, August 4, 1800; *New England Palladium*, January 12, 1808; *Essex Journal and New Hampshire Packet*, January 13, 1791.
11. Dexter, 27; *Columbian Centinel*, March 14, 1787 and ff.
12. *National Intelligencer*, April 18, 1805.
13. *Charleston City Gazette*, December 4, 1797.
14. *Columbian Centinel*, March 11, 1795.
15. *Ibid.*, January 1, June 15 and 18, 1791.
16. *Dictionary of American Biography*; Penny, 108-09. Cf. also Tharp, chapter II, and *passim*.
17. *Newport Herald*, June 25, 1791; *Massachusetts Centinel*, April 27, 1785; *South Carolina State Gazette*, August 6, 1792.
18. Supplement to *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, June 3, 1795.
19. Dall, *Alongside*, 37.
20. *Aurora Gazette*, June 7, 1806; Prime, Ser. II, 229.
21. December 17, 1806.
22. *New England Palladium*, April 26 and May 10, 1808.
23. *Hawkers and Walkers*, 236-37.
24. See Chapter VI, note 35, and Byles, August 13, 1814.
25. Adams, I, 656; Fleet, 20; M. P. Tyler, 268.
26. Penny, 106; Dall, *College, Market, and Court*, 199.
27. Briggs, I, 326; Crawford, I, 197.
28. E. B. Hall, 63-64.
29. *College, Market and Court*, 201.
30. Cheney, IV, 332.
31. Woodbury, 256; A. S. Blackwell, 6.
32. Penny, 105 ff.; Dall, *op. cit.*, 187-97.
33. Hussey, 26 ff.
34. Dall, *op. cit.*, 197-98.
35. Farnham, 77, 79.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *"The Compleat Seamstress"*

1. *Society*, II, 258.
2. Fearon, 161; Larcom, 121.
3. Joslin, 349.
4. E. g., *New York Daily Gazette*, May 31, 1792.
5. *Columbian Centinel*, May 15, 1793.
6. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1793; Winsor, I, 538 n.; *Columbian Centinel*, June 11, 1791; *New England Palladium*, April 26, 1808.
7. *New York Daily Gazette*, February 7, 1793; *New York Morning Post*, November 14, 1791; in the *General Advertiser*.
8. *National Intelligencer*, January 20, 1818; January 4, 1821; April 3, 1821.
9. *Connecticut Courant*, July 16, 1792; *Albany Gazette*, February 17, 1797; *Norfolk Herald*, January 17, 1801; *Maine Gazette*, January 4, 1822; *Louisville Public Advertiser*, July 10, 1830.

10. [Boston] *Columbian Sentinel*, December 7, 1793; [Baltimore] *Federal Gazette*, September 28, 1803.
11. Penny, 317; cf. M. Carey, 42.
12. Royall, *Sketches*, 202.
13. Mrs. Hall, 267.
14. *Society*, II, 208
15. Trollope, I, 11
16. *College, Market, and Court*, 469-70.
17. Zahm, 344, 351; Slafter, IV, 156; Rhine, 278; Larned, II, 432.
18. Adams, I, 650, 965.
19. *Niles*, January 10, 1824; cf. June 18, 1831.
20. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1830; October 25, 1834; December 5, 1835.
21. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1830.
22. Tuckerman, *passim*.
23. Hunt, 133
24. Kemble, I, 14-15.
25. Henry, *Women and Labor*, 41 ff.; *Trade Union Woman*, 6-7; *Niles*, September 18, 1830; Penny, 308-10.
26. Royall, *Sketches*, 261.
27. Foster, *The Boarding School*, 11-12.
28. M. Carey, 18.
29. *Society*, 208.

## CHAPTER IX

### *When Eve Delved*

1. Martineau, *Society*, II, 54; Chevalier, 242-43 and note.
2. Fuller, 321; Child, *History*, II, 265-66; Adams, I, 615.
3. Melish, I, 121
4. *College, Market and Court*, 172-73.
5. Headley, 241-44.
6. *Dictionary of American Biography*; Hopley, 342; Royall, *Sketches*, 48-50; *Niles*, October 19, 1822.
7. *Society*, II, 104, 237
8. Ellet, II, 68-76.
9. Zahm, 351; Gage, 3; Phillips, 95-96.
10. Chastellux, 266-67; 279-82.
11. *National Intelligencer*, October 27, 1821; *Virginia Gazette and Winchester Centinel*, August 19, 1796; *National Intelligencer*, March 26, 1818; in *Norfolk Epitome*, and see also September 8, 1801.
12. Hiltzheimer, 57.
13. *The Silk Question*, 27.
14. *Ibid.*, 22 ff
15. Dennis, 91.
16. Heusser, 131, 137; Manchester, 36.
17. In the *Norfolk Epitome of the Times*.
18. East, 21.
19. Dall, *College, Market, and Court*, 460.
20. Pynchon, 131; *Salem Gazette*, December 27, 1781; Briggs, I, 52-54, portrait 58.
21. *Ibid.*, I, 166-69.

22. Bagg, *Pioneers*, 7, 123 ff, and *History*, 65-67; *Niles*, October 1, 1831.
23. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1840.
24. Fearon, 247 n.
25. Dexter, 125
26. Kirkland, 722.

## CHAPTER X

### *And When She Span*

1. For a careful history of this development, see Caroline Ware, or Helen Sumner Woodbury. A good brief account may be found in Josephson, 13-15.
2. Rantoul, 6.
3. Kohn, 8; Mitchell, 266.
4. J. Montgomery, 143; G. S. White, 74-76; Copeland, 3 ff.; Bagnall, 148, 158, 161.
5. Nelson, 121; Royall, *Sketches*, 340; Shlakman, 34-35.
6. Copeland, 3, 5, 11.
7. Channing, III, 425; Bagnall, 109; Cole, I, 64, 189, 237 ff.; Tucker, 160, 199
8. G. S. White, 131.
9. Letter from Harriet Williams, quoted below; Wyckhoff, 17 ff.; Heusser, 100 ff.
10. Bagnall, 173-74
11. Quoted in *Niles*, June 23, 1827; see *ibid.*, July 19, 1828, and Vanderpoel, *American Lace*, 2-3.
12. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 193.
13. *Ibid.*, 17, 86.
14. *Niles*, June 28, 1839; Chevalier, 137; Henry, *Women and Labor Movement*, 38, and *Trade Union Woman*, 4; Shlakman, 55-56.
15. Cole, 240, ff.
16. G. S. White, 118; 126; *American Notes*, Chapter IV.
17. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 17.
18. Robinson, *Early Factory Labor*, 8-9.
19. Woodbury, "Historical Development," 24. Cf. Josephson, 80-81 and note.
20. American Notes, *op. cit.*
21. Scoresby, 14; James, II, 236.
22. Martineau, *Society*, II, 41, 56; Larcom, 175 ff.; *American Notes*, *op. cit.*
23. Lyell, I, 117-19; Washington, IV, 37.
24. Chevalier, 139-40; G. S. White, 113 ff.; Larcom, 145, Martineau, *Society*, II, 137.
25. Quoted by Woody, II, 21.
26. Henry, *Trade Union Woman*, 4.
27. Robinson, *Early Factory Labor*, 8-10; Chevalier, 140-43.
28. Harriet Williams' letter, below; Thomas, *Diary*, 195.
29. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, 10-11, 45; Larcom, 145, 152.
30. Heusser, 136.
31. Kenngott, 17; *Early Factory Labor*, 12, 19-25; Chevalier, 143.
32. Cf. Rantoul, note 2; Martineau, *Society*, II, 41-42, 54.
33. *Early Factory Labor*, 11-13; cf. Martineau, *Society*, 54 ff.
34. See Caroline Ware, 236, 240.
35. See note 5; *Anthony Genealogy*, 234, 244, 255; *Anthony Papers*.

## CONCLUSION

1. The phrase, — quoted in the Introduction — is Miss Beecher's. An unnamed man, quoted in Gilchrist, page 307, expressed it, "that beautiful seclusion in which female loveliness should live and move, and have both its being and rewards."
2. Preliminary report of the director of the Bureau of the Census, quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1950; *Women at Work*, 13, 15; Frieda S. Miller, "Women in the Labor Force," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May, 1947, 39.
3. *Society*, II, 226 ff.
4. Fearon, 380; Bremer, II, 569.
5. Dwight, 110.
6. Kemble, I, 42; Martineau, *Society*, II, 237, 256; Trollope, I, 105; Fuller, 107; and Mrs. Hall, *passim*.
7. See chapter II, notes 44 to 47, and also Cheney, IV, 338.
8. Information is abundant. The Bentley diary and the Byles letters fairly bristle with references to these and other philanthropies. See also Carey, *passim*.
9. *Society*, II, 231.
10. Irwin, 3, 5.
11. *Ibid.*, 4, Hunt, 44
12. Dr. Chadwick wrote in 1879 (page 471) "We have reached the absurd stage . . . where the burning question is no longer, shall women be allowed to practise medicine? . . . [but] shall we give them the opportunity for studying medicine?"
13. For discussion of the general theory, see Veblen, 54-57, 178-80, 352-53, and Putnam, *passim*. A friendly critic finds it hard to believe that the generation which was developing "Jacksonian democracy" would encourage or even permit idleness among its women. I recognize the incongruity. My interpretation may be wrong, but I have confidence in the evidence which (without any preconceptions on my part) has led me to make it.
14. Miss Dix was the oldest of those named here, — born in 1802, and Dr. Blackwell was the youngest, born in 1821; and the list of great contemporaries could be considerably extended. None of these women, with the possible exception of Margaret Fuller, had made any mark by 1840.

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*National Intelligencer*, Washington, 1800-30.

*New England Palladium*, Boston, 1803-31.

*New York Daily Advertiser*, 1785-1806.

*New York Morning Post*, 1783-92.

*New York Weekly Museum*, 1788-1817.

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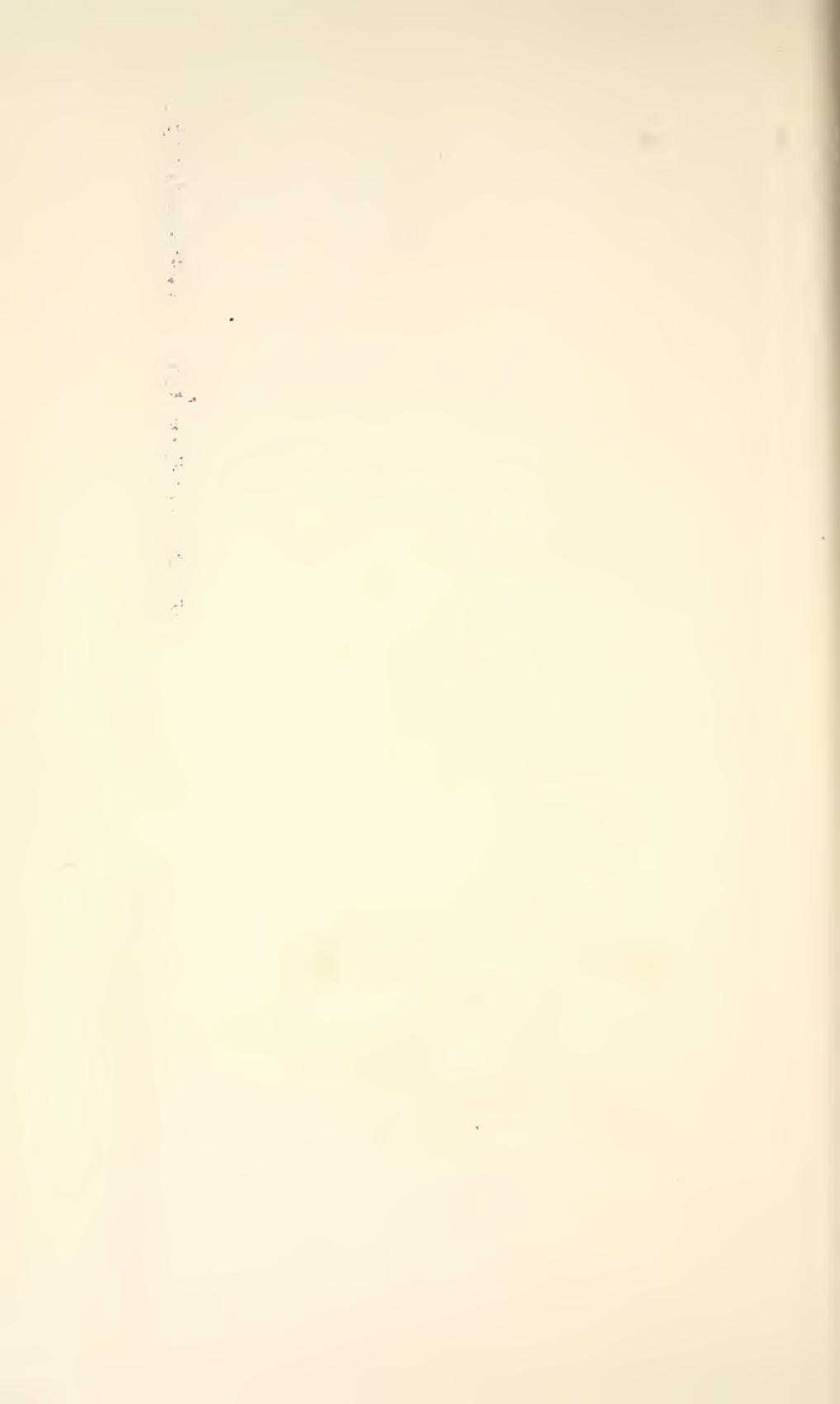
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